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OLIVER CROMWELL:

AN

Historical Romance.

William Henry Herbert

EDITED

BY HORACE SMITH, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

“BRAMBLETYE HOUSE.”

Yet is the tale, *true* though it be, as strange,
As full, methinks, of wild and wondrous change,
As any that the wandering tribes require,
Stretched in the desert round their evening fire;
As any sung of old in hall or bower
To minstrel-harps at midnight's witching hour.

ROGERS'S *Poems*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE
EDITOR'S PREFACE.

It is no slight evidence of the superior importance attached to the life and times of Cromwell, that while most of our legitimate sovereigns are allowed to repose quietly in their coffins, undisturbed by any other inquest than that of the general historian, the Lord Protector is constantly finding new and special biographers: and it is not less honourable to the character of that illustrious man, than to the candour of his recent chroniclers, that they nearly all concur in vindicating his just fame, by removing some portion of the unmeasured calumny and wrong which party rancour and religious intolerance had combined to heap upon his memory. Dr. Vaughan's "Protectorate" had hardly issued from the press when Mr. Forster's work* was announced, almost simul-

* Oliver Cromwell. Lives of eminent British Statesmen, Vol. VI., of which there is an elaborate and vigorously written notice in the London and Westminster Review for October, 1839.

conjure up a prophesying phantasm is probable enough; and, indeed, Mr. Forster has adduced abundant evidence to prove that in his boyhood he was subject to morbid hypochondriacal paroxysms, which savoured of temporary hallucination. But it is not probable, if both "fate and metaphysical aid" had thus conspired to "have him crowned withal," that he should have remained a mere plodding country-gentleman until his fortieth year, without a single attempt to realize this stimulating prediction, had he been naturally of an ambitious temperament. In the most excitable period of life, and when the country was already agitated by the commencement of those fierce struggles between the King and the Parliament which speedily burst into civil war, we find Cromwell proposing to withdraw from the approaching conflict by emigrating to America,—a resolution hardly reconcileable either with the tale of the supposed vision, or the charge of an ungovernable desire of personal aggrandizement. Had there been any seeds of this passion in his earlier mind, must they not have germinated and borne fruit under circumstances so favourable to their growth? Instead of assigning the actions of men to their innate propensities, it would per-

haps be more philosophical to affirm, as a general proposition, that characters are rather created than developed by circumstances; a view of human faculties and impulses which will explain many of the seeming contradictions in the opposite aspects of Cromwell, at different periods of his life. Of these external influences the importance, as to results, will of course be commensurate with the power and aptitude of the mind upon which they operate, and we may fairly estimate the superiority of Cromwell's intellect by the skill and courage with which he seized upon opportunities, however unexpected, and moulded them to the lofty purposes which they suggested, and almost called upon him to execute. The civil war gave him rapid promotion in the army—promotion led him to qualify himself for higher command;—his first victory inspired confidence;—confidence ensured success; and thus the country-gentleman, whose primary exertions in parliament bore reference to the draining of the Cambridge fens, eventually became Lord Protector.

Ambition seems to have been the result rather than the cause of his elevation; and when once exerted, it found its gratification in the aggrandizement of his country rather than of himself;—

in the realization of his patriotic boast that he would cause the name of a Briton to be as much respected throughout the world as ever was that of an antique Roman;—in raising England from the prostration and contempt in which he found her, and into which she so quickly relapsed after his death, to a condition of greater power and dignity than she had ever attained under the most fortunate of her lawful sovereigns; and above all, in enforcing religious toleration, a lofty object, of which, notwithstanding the great peril of its maintenance, in an age of sectarian bigotry, he was ever the steady and uncompromising champion. If this be an inordinate ambition, where shall we look for a patriotism sufficiently pure and restricted to merit our unqualified applause?

To the charge of consummate hypocrisy it is more difficult to provide an answer, since it is one which (in religious matters at least) does not easily admit either of proof or refutation. If we admit him to have been sincerely and deeply inspired with spiritual enthusiasm, at the outset of his career (and this will hardly be denied), who shall fix the exact point, if indeed it ever occurred, when he ceased to deceive himself and began to deceive others? Illusion

often lapses into dissimulation, and not infrequently the process is removed, while the parties themselves remain totally unconscious of the interchange. How then shall others penetrate these inscrutable workings of the human mind? Cromwell's advancement to supreme power in England, and to permanent influence as an European sovereign, assumed so much the appearance of a miracle, that it might well confirm him in the belief of his being a chosen instrument of the Lord, and might thus preserve to the last, in all their ardour, sanctity, and integrity, those devout convictions which, having been imbibed in boyhood, seem to have "grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength."

From political hypocrisy we shall not attempt to defend him further than by inquiring what king or statesman, either before the days of Machiavel, or since, has ever scrupled to employ finesse in the exercise of his craft? If such men be justified in concealing their real purposes and effecting false ones, why should we condemn the use of similar weapons in the Lord Protector, assailed as he was on all sides by the machinations and manœuvres of many furious factions, and exposed to ever-recurring treasons, strata-

gems, and plots against his authority and his life? To open evidences he had invariably opposed the courage of the lion: against secret foes he had no other defence than by recurring to the cunning of the serpent. As a general position it may safely be affirmed, that whenever he was driven to measures of a severe and despotic nature, or descended to the practice of artifice and duplicity, it was against his better nature, and under the coercion of a stern necessity, which rendered such courses absolutely necessary to his self-preservation. Dr. Vaughan has quoted part of an article from the twenty-fifth volume of the Quarterly Review, which concurs in these sentiments, and which deserves every eulogy for the candid and generous spirit in which it is written.

These preliminary remarks have been deemed necessary, because the reader who may have derived his opinions from the pages of Hume and similar partisans, may perhaps be startled at the exalted character ascribed to Cromwell in the following work. To the editor it appears that the novelist's privilege of embellishment has not been abused, even for his historical hero;—his defects, his delusions, his deathbed remorse, are stated as frankly and fully as his

great actions; and though his portrait be undoubtedly drawn by a friendly hand, no competent judge will deny that it presents, upon the whole, a faithful and a striking likeness, executed by an artist of no common powers.

It may be thought, too, by some, that the unfortunate Monarch and his Queen are painted in darker colours than they deserve; a charitable conclusion which history and truth will hardly warrant. After making all due allowance for the despotic principles in which Charles had been educated, for the sinister influence of his queen, and the evil counsels of headstrong and incompetent advisers, misfortunes which go far to explain, if they cannot extenuate his misdeeds, enough will remain to convict him substantially, if not literally, of every thing laid to his charge in the ensuing pages. Not until after repeated and flagrant confirmations of utter faithlessness was Cromwell driven to assert in the House of Commons, that "the King was a very able man, but whithal a great dissembler; one in whom no trust could be reposed, and with whom, therefore, they ought to have nothing to do for the future." For the groundwork of the intercepted letter in the novel, wherein the King boasts of his trickery with Ireton and Cromwell, and expresses a hope that instead of a silken

garter, he shall live to fit them with a hempen rope, there is the authority of Roger Coke; whom Hume, however, calls "a very foolish and passionate historian, totally unworthy of credit." The circumstances attending the seizure of the letter in question, seem to have been taken, with very little embellishment from Lord Broghill's memoirs.

The fictitious characters introduced are few in number, and generally kept subordinate to the historical personages, a proof of the author's good judgment; for the times were so stirring, the public events so startling, not to say romantic, the great drama of reality so absorbing in its interest, that the brightest creations of fancy must have "paled their ineffectual fire" before the dazzling, though sometimes baleful and ominous splendours of actual life.

In closing these prefatory remarks, the editor may perhaps be allowed to express his belief that the work which they introduce to public notice is destined to take a high place among the class to which it belongs; and that few readers can rise from its perusal, without pronouncing it to be an interesting, manly, and vigorous production.

H. S.

BRIGHTON, August, 1840.

CROMWELL.

BOOK I.

Not to the embattled field
Shall the achievements of the peaceful gown,
The green immortal crown
Of valour, or the songs of conquest yield.
Not Fairfax wildly bold,
While bare of crest he hewed his fatal way
Through Naseby's firm array,
To heavier dangers did his breast oppose
Than Pym's free virtue chose
When the proud force of Strafford he controlled.

AKENSIDE.



CROMWELL.

CHAPTER I.

Can this be HE—
That hath no privilege of gentle birth,
Beauty, nor grace, nor utterance sublime
Of words persuasive, nor the bloodbought skill
That wins i'the foughthen field?—

“EVEN as you will, fair sir!—Though, an you ride for Huntingdon this night, and wish not, ere it be two hours the later, that you had tarried here at the White Dragon, then am not I called Walter Danforth, nor have I drawn good ale in Royston these forty years and better!”

With this prophetic sentence did the lord of cup and can wind up a long narration of roads impassable, and bridges broken, and “all the moving accidents of flood and field,” with which, according to time-honoured usage among the heroes of the spigot, he was endeavouring to beguile the lated wayfarer. In the present instance, however, it would seem that the ominous warning of the worthy Boniface was destined to be of none effect ; for with a cheery smile the traveller answered—

“ ’Tis like enough, good host of mine,—so all the cates of the White Dragon vie with this puissant Bourdeaux”—and, as he spoke, he proffered to the landlord’s grasp the mighty flagon of bright pewter, which, despite his eulogy, he had left still mantling with its generous liquor ;—“ but, were the venture deeper, I must on to-night ; and, in good sooth, too often have I journeyed through the midnight passes

of the wild Abruzzi, and the yet wilder Pyrenean hills of Spain, to ponder gravely on a late ride, or a sprinkled doublet, among these chalky wolds of Hertfordshire.”

“Ay! were that all”—returned the other, heaving a long breath after the potent draught by which he had exhausted the flagon, and eyeing wistfully the coins which had dropped with so sweet a jingle into his greasy palm,—“Ay! were that all; but there are worse customers on Ermine-street than darkness, or storm either—though the clouds be mustering so black in the west yonder, over the woods of Potton. Wise men ride not forth nowadays an hour after sundown, nor earlier save in company.”

“Then must Old England be sore changed, since last I left her,” replied the traveller, a shade of thought or sorrow, for it might be either, crossing his features, and not entirely effaced by the frank smile, which followed it.

“And if she be”—he paused, unwilling, as brave men ever are, to utter sentiments, which might, however justified by the occasion, sound boastfully.

“And if she be?” inquired the interested Walter, seeing that his guest hesitated to complete his sentence,—“and if she be sore changed?”—

“Why then hath Brown Bess borne me through worse frays than I am like to meet, I trow, on this side Huntingdon; nor will it be small peril that shall arrest her now!—and so, good e’en, fair landlord!”

“A bold bird, and a braggart!” muttered the disconcerted publican, as the horseman, giving the spur to the high-bred mare of which he had just spoken, rode briskly off; “but if he meet with those I wot of, he may yet crow craven!”

Who those were, to whom his words so

pointedly alluded, is not perhaps a question of more than ordinary moment, unless it be from the vast conception of their prowess which appears to have been entertained by the landlord of the White Dragon; for, in truth, the gentleman who had earned his ill-will merely by a natural reluctance to tarry in Royston, when his occasions called him elsewhere, was of very different mould from one of whom it would be said, that he was like to fall an easy or unresisting prey to any who should dare dispute his progress. Removed alike from the greenness of inconsiderate youth, and from the inactivity of advanced age, the rider might be looked upon as exhibiting a specimen of manhood, in the full vigour of its endowments, both mental and corporeal, as fair as is permitted by the imperfections of humanity. Considerably above the ordinary height of men, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, and thin-flanked, he sat

his charger with an ease and firmness resulting more from natural grace, and flexibility of limb, than from the practised art of the *manège*. His eye was clear and even quick, though thought and calmness seemed to belong, rather than energy or fire, to its general expression—qualities belied neither by the broad imaginative forehead, nor by the firm and slightly-compressed outline of his lips. He wore a small mustache, but neither beard nor whiskers, although both these were common in the last years of the unhappy monarch who at that time swayed the destinies of England. His hair, as was the wont among the higher classes of society, flowed in loose curls, trained with peculiar care, far down the neck, and over the collar of the doublet, while a single ringlet, longer and more assiduously cherished than the rest, seemed to indicate that the wearer was not of one mind with the pamphlet, then recently published by

the notorious master Prynne, on the "Unloveliness of Lovelocks."

The dress of this cavalier, a loose velvet jerkin of that peculiar shade which, from being the favourite colour of the greatest painter of his day, has been dignified with the immortal title of Vandyke, was slashed and broidered with black lace and satin; tight breeches of buff leather guarded with tawny silk, high boots, and massive spurs, completed his attire; all save a broad-leafed hat of dark gray beaver, with one black ostrich feather drooping, from the clasp which held it, over the left eyebrow. His military cloak of sable cloth and velvet was buckled to the croup of his war-saddle, while from beneath the housings of the bow peered out the heavy pistols, which had not long before supplanted the lance, as the peculiar weapon of the horseman. A long rapier, with its steel scabbard and basket-hilt of silver delicately carved,

hung from a shoulder-scarf of the same colour with his doublet, matched by a poniard of yet more costly fabric in his cordovan leather girdle.

When it is added, that the mare, which he had styled Brown Bess, was an animal that might be pronounced unrivalled, for the rare union she displayed of strength and beauty, of English bone and high Arabian blood—the latter manifested in the clean limb, full eye, and coat glancing like polished copper to the sunlight—nought will be wanting to the picture of the traveller who was now journeying right onward, undismayed, if not incredulous, of all that he had heard, across the bleak and barren hills which skirt the southern verge of Cambridgeshire.

The season was that, usually the most delicious of the English year—the bright and golden days of early autumn, when the promises of spring and summer are fulfilled in the

rustling harvest-field, and the rich orchard, and before the thoughts of change, decay, and death, are forced upon the mind by the sere leaf and withered herbage. The day had been mild and calm, and though evening was far advanced, the sun was still shooting his slant rays over the rounded summits and grassy slopes of the low hills, through which the ancient Roman way holds its undeviating course. Ere long, however, the clouds, of which the landlord had spoken as gathering so darkly to the westward, though at that time visible only in a narrow streak along the edge of the horizon, began to rise in towering masses, until the light of the declining day-god was first changed to a dark and lurid crimson, and then wholly intercepted. After a while the wind, which had been slight and southerly, veered round, and blew in fitful squalls, now whirling the dust and stubble high into the air, and

again subsiding into a stillness that, from the contrast around, seemed unnatural. Such was the aspect of the night when the sun set, and the little light which had hitherto struggled through intervals of the increasing storm-cloud waned rapidly to almost utter darkness.

To render the traveller's position yet less enviable, he had already passed the open country, and was now involved in the mazes of scattered woodland, which in the seventeenth century overspread so large a portion of that country. The way, too, which had thus far been firm and in good order, now running between deep hollow banks, resembled rather a water-course deserted by its torrent, than a public thoroughfare; so that his progress was both slow and painful, until he reached the banks of the Cam; at that place, as throughout much of its course, a strong and turbid stream wheeling along in sullen eddies, between shores of soft black loam. Here

daylight utterly deserted him, its last glimpse barely sufficing to show that the bridge had been carried away, and that the river was apparently unfordable; since a miry track wandered away from the brink to the left hand, as though in search of a place where it might pass the current, and resume its natural direction to the northward.

While he was considering what course it would be most advisable that he should pursue a few large heavy drops of rain plashed on the surface of the gloomy stream, warning the stranger to hasten his decision. Then, as he turned to follow, as best he might, the devious and uncertain path before him, the windows of the heavens were opened, and down came the thick shower, pattering on the thirsty earth, and lashing the river's bosom into a sheet of whitened spray. Thoroughly drenched, and almost hopeless of recovering the true direction

of his journey until the return of daylight, it yet was not a part of that man's character to hesitate, much less to falter or despair. Having once determined what it would be for the best to do, he went right onward to his purpose; though it oftentimes required the full exercise of spur and rein to force the gallant animal which he bestrode, against the furious gusts and pelting storm.

For a weary hour, or more, he plodded onward, feeling his way, as it were, step by step, and guided only by the flashes of broad lightning which from time to time glared over the desolate scene, with an intensity that merely served to render the succeeding gloom more dreary. At length, by the same transient illumination, he discovered that his path once more turned northward, sinking abruptly to the verge of that black river.

Of the further bank he* could distinguish

nothing ; and, though for many minutes he awaited the return of the electric light before attempting to stem the unknown ford, with that singular perversity, which even things inanimate and senseless at times seem to exhibit, the flashes returned no more. Still, no word of impatience or profanity rose to his lip, as he spurred the reluctant mare resolutely down the steep descent, holding his pistols, which he had drawn from their holsters, high above his head. At the first plunge, as he had well expected, all foothold was lost, and nothing remained but a perilous swim, not without considerable risk of finding an impracticable bank at the further side ; but, whether it was the result of skill or fortune, or more probable than either, a combination of the two, after a few rough struggles, and a scramble through the tenacious mire, horse and man stood in safety on the northern verge.

Not yet, however, could the adventures of

that night be deemed at an end; for, having once deviated from it during the hours of darkness, it was no easy matter to recover the line of the high-road. The storm, it is true, after a while abated, and the by-path into which he struck was sufficiently hard to enable the cavalier to travel at a pace more rapid than he had tried since quitting Royston; but, notwithstanding this, so much time had been lost, and so small did the prospect seem of reaching his destination, or indeed any other village at which to pass the night, that the merciful rider was beginning to occupy himself in searching for such temporary shelter as a cattle-shed, or the lee side of some lonely haystack might afford, when his eye was attracted by a distant light, now seen, now lost, among the young plantations, or scattered stripes of forest, which checkered every where the scenery.

It required but a moment's pause to discover

that the light was in motion, and at a smaller distance than he had at first conjectured ; and, though there might have been grounds for suspicion and distrust to the weak or timid, in the place and manner of its appearance, quickening his pace to a gallop, and somewhat altering his course, he rode straight for the object. Five minutes brought him to a bank and ditch, evidently skirting the road of which he was in quest. The clatter of the horse's hoofs, as he leaped the trifling obstacle, and landed safely on the rough pavement of the Roman way, was, it should seem, the first intimation of his approach that reached the bearers of the light ; for ere he could distinguish more than the figures of two or three rude-looking countrymen, one of them bearing on his shoulders what resembled the carcass of a deer, it was either extinguished altogether, or suddenly veiled from sight.

“They are upon us,” cried a hoarse voice, “shoot, Wilkin,” and instantly the clang of a steel cross-bow, and the whistle of the heavy bolt, as it narrowly missed the rider’s ear, showed that the mandate was complied with as promptly as delivered.

“Hold! Hold your hands!” he shouted, “or ye will fare the worse. Ye know me not, nor care I aught for ye!”

“Fare the worse, shall we?” interrupted the other, “that shall we see anon! Come on, brave boys, and down with this proud meddler!” and with a loud fierce cry, some six or seven ruffians, as he judged from the sound of their footsteps, rushed against him. In the moment which had elapsed since the first outrage, he had prepared his weapons, and was already on his guard; but it was not destined that he should, this time, need their service; for, just as he reined up his steed, and parried the first blow aimed

at him with a crow-bar, or a quarter-staff, the quick tramp of coming horsemen was heard upon the road behind him, and with their swords drawn, as if excited by the shout of the ruffians, two or three persons galloped rapidly to his assistance.

“What knaves be these?” inquired a loud and dissonant voice, from the foremost of the new-comers, as the cavalier fell back toward his welcome rescuers,—“what knaves be these, that make this coil on the highway?”

“Down with the thieving Girkashites!” shouted another of the riders, ere an answer could be rendered to the querist; and, at the word, he fired a petronel at random, its momentary flash displaying the marauders struggling as best they might, through a strong blackthorn fence, which parted the road from a wild tract of coppice, glade, and woodland.

“Deer-stealers, master Oliver,” he continued,

reslinging his now useless weapon, “after the herds of my Lord de la Warr! but I have scared them for the nonce!”

“More shame to thee, Giles Overton,” cried the same voice which had first spoken, “and more sin likewise, to use the carnal weapon thus in causeless strife; setting the precious spirit of a being like to, or—it may well be—better than, thyself, upon the darkling venture of chance-medley; and bartering a human life against the slaughter of a valueless and soulless beast! Go to! Giles Overton, see that thou err not in the like sort again!—But art thou hurt, good sir?” proceeded the speaker, turning in his saddle toward the traveller for whose safety he had come up so opportunely—“or have we, by the mercy of the Lord, who may in this—if it be not presumptuous in me, considering how unprofitable I am, and the mean improvement of my talent, so to judge of his workings—have

vouchsafed to preserve thee for a chosen vessel, —have we, I would say, come in season to protect thee from these sons of Ammon ?”

“ Thanks to your timely aid, fair sir,” replied the cavalier, not a little astonished at the strange address of his preserver, for he had but recently returned to his native land after protracted absence, and, at the time of his departure, the language of puritanism was not yet in vogue. “ I am uninjured ; and now, I pray you to increase yet further this your kindness, by informing me the straightest road for Huntingdon ; it cannot be, I do suppose, far distant.”

“ Good lack—a stranger—by your questioning,” answered he who had been called Oliver. “ Huntingdon do I know right well—ay ! even as one knoweth the tabernacle of his abode, and the burial-place of his fathers ; but I profess to you that it is distant by full thirteen miles, and those of sorry road. But ride thou on with me

to Bourne, some three miles further, and I will bestow thee at a house where thou mayest tarry until morn—the Fox tavern I would say—Phineas Goodenough, my glove hath fallen, I pray thee reach it to me—a clean house truly, kept by a worthy man—yea, verily a good man, one that dwelleth in the fear of the Lord always.”

“A stranger am I, doubtless,” returned the other, “else had I not inquired of thee that which then I had well known; and, of a truth, I know not now that I can do aught better than to accept your proffer frankly as it is made!”

“Be it so!” was the ready answer. “Will it please you to ride somewhat briskly—for myself, I am bound an hour’s ride further, to worshipful master Pym’s, nigh Caldecote.”

“Ha! Pym, the friend of Hampden and John Milton. I knew not he lived hereabout,” exclaimed the cavalier.

“And what knowest thou, so I may ask it,” queried Oliver, “of Hampden or John Milton? Truly I took thee for a carnal-minded person, but, of a surety, it is not for a man to judge!”

“For what it liketh your wisdom to mistake me, I know not; nor, to speak frankly, do I care greatly,” replied the other; “but, to satisfy your question, of Hampden I know nothing, save that the mode of his resistance to that illegal claim of ship-money hath reached my ears, even where the tongue of England would have sounded strangely. John Milton, if it concerns you any thing to hear of him, was, and that too for many months, my chosen comrade of the road, and my most eloquent tutor in the classic lore of Italy!”

“In Italy, saidst thou? In Italy, and with John Milton?” inquired Oliver, after a long meditative pause; and, as he continued, his voice had lost much of its harshness, and

his manner not a little of its offensive peculiarity. "A better comrade couldst thou not have chosen than that pure-minded Christian—that most zealous patriot. Verily, I say to you, that in consorting with that sanctified, elected vessel, you must needs have imbibed some draughts more worthy than the profane and carnal lore of those benighted heathens, whose bestial and idolatrous rites are even now to be found corrupting with their accursed stench the faith which claims to be of Jesus, even as the stinking fly poisoneth the salve of the mediciner. Verily, I will believe that he hath opened unto you the door of that wisdom which is alone all in all! Ay! and as I find you here returning hard upon his heels, even as he hath of late returned, from the city of her that sitteth on the seven hills, clothed in the purple of the harlot, may I not humbly hope—I would say confidently trust—that you will also draw the sword

of truth, to defend this sore-aggrieved and spirit-broken people from the tyrannous oppression of their rulers, and the self-seeking idolatries of those that sit in the high places of the land !”

“Fair sir,” replied the cavalier, “you question somewhat too closely, and converse, methinks, too freely for a stranger. That I come, summoned homeward by the rumour of these unhappy broils between our sovereign and his parliament, is not less true, than that I care not either to conceal or to deny it ! *Beyond* this—what part soever I may play in that which is to come—pardon my plainness, sir—I do not deem it wisdom to discourse with a chance customer. Nor have I yet, indeed, decided what that part shall be, until I search more narrowly the grounds, and so find out my way, ’twixt overlicence on the one hand, and, as it seems to me, intemperance on the other, and too fiery zeal !”

“Edgar Ardenne,” returned the puritan, his naturally harsh voice subsiding into a hollow croak,—“Edgar Ardenne,—for I do know you, though, as you have truly spoken me, a stranger,—I tell you now this nation totters on the brink of a most strange and perilous convulsion! We are the instruments—vile instruments it is true, but still instruments—in the hands of Him who holds the end of all things. Watched have we, and prayed, yea wrestled with Him in the spirit, for a sign—and lo! a sign was sent us. It may be, we shall achieve deliverance for our country—freedom from corporeal chains and spiritual bondage! It may be we shall fail, and, failing, seek the shelter of that New Jerusalem beyond the western ocean, wherein there be no kings to lord it o’er men’s consciences, and to compel them how to worship God!—But fail we, or succeed, the sign hath been given to us from

on high, and therefore shall we venture! And fail we, or succeed, mark my words, Edgar Ardenne, for thou shalt think on them hereafter—thy lot is cast with ours! Thy spirit is of our order, thy heart *is* with us, and thy tongue *shall be*, yea and thy sword likewise!”

“How you have learned my name, I comprehend not,” answered Ardenne) for so must he be styled henceforth), veiling whatever of suspicion or annoyance he might feel, beneath the semblance of a cold and dignified indifference; “but were it worth the while, I could assure you that in learning this, you have learnt all. What part you play in this wild drama, whether you be hypocrite or zealot, patriot or traitor, I care nothing; but if we meet hereafter, you will learn that neither sophistry nor canting can affect my head, nor the dark phrensy of fanaticism reach my heart!”

“We *shall* meet,” answered the stranger, “we *shall* meet again and shortly ! and then shall you too learn if I be saint or hypocrite, if I be patriot or traitor ! and, above all, then shall you learn if, in these things that I have spoken, I be a lying prophet, or a true ! But lo you now ! this is the Fox at Bourne, and here comes honest Langton, to whose good offices I do commit you !”

As he spoke, they drew up their horses before the door of the little wayside hostelry, a low and whitewashed tenement imbosomed in deep woodlands, and nestling as it were amid the verdant foliage of jessamine and woodbine : while warned already of their coming by the clatter of hoofs and the sound of voices, the puritanic person of mine host, bearing on high a huge and smoky flambeau, stalked forth to meet them. On his lean and starveling form Ardenne cast but a passing glance, being

employed in scrutinizing, by the illumination which streamed full upon them, the features of his singular companion, who had paused for a moment to allow his horse to drink, and to hold a whispered conversation with the landlord. There was, however, nothing familiar to him, though he probed his memory to its lowest depth of youthful recollections, in that manly yet ungraceful figure, or in those lineaments harsh and ill-favoured to the verge of downright ugliness. Ill-favoured was that countenance, indeed, with its deeply-furrowed lines and its sanguineous colouring; its sunken eyes, twinkling below the penthouse of the heavy matted brows; and its nose prominent, rubicund, and swollen. Yet was there a world of thought, in the expansive temples, and the massive forehead, and an expression of firmness that might restrain an empire, in the downward curve of the bold mouth, and a general air of high

authority and indomitable resolution, pervading the whole aspect of the man. The head of this remarkable-looking individual, at a period when the greatest attention was lavished on the hair by all of gentle birth, was covered with coarse locks, already streaked with gray, falling in long disordered masses on either cheek, and down the muscular short neck, from underneath a rusty beaver, steeple-crowned, and unadorned by feather, loop, or tassel. Instead of the cravat of Flanders lace, he wore a narrow band of soiled and rumpled linen; and his sword, a heavy iron-hilted tuck, was not suspended from a scarf or shoulder-knot, but girt about his middle, over a doublet of black serge, by a belt of calfskin leather, corresponding to the material of his riding-boots, which were pulled up above the knee to meet the loose trunk hose, fashioned, as it would be supposed, by some ill country tailor, from the

same unseemly stuff with his cloak and doublet. The only part of his appointments, which would not have disgraced the commonest gentleman, was his horse, a tall gray gelding, of great power and not a little breeding; yet even he was badly accoutred with mean and sordid housings.

Such was the appearance of the person whose conversation had not been listened to by Edgar Ardenne without deep interest; and now—even while he confessed to himself that the man's frame and features entitled him to no regard as a person of superior caste or bearing, there was still something in his air, which produced an indescribable effect on the mind of the cavalier, forcing him, as it were, despite his senses, to admit that he was in some wise remarkable, above, and at the same time apart from, ordinary mortals, and not

unlikely to one who might be indeed the mover of great changes in the estate of nations.

While Edgar was yet gazing on him with ill-dissembled curiosity, the stranger, in his loud hoarse notes, bade him adieu, and striking at once into a rapid trot, was swallowed up with his companions in the surrounding gloom. Edgar, after a fruitless effort at ascertaining from the saintly and abstracted publican the name and quality of his late companion, applied himself to creature comforts, as the landlord termed them, of a higher order, and to a bed more neatly garnished, than he could have augured from the lowly exterior of the village inn.

CHAPTER II.

A gentle being, delicately fair ;
Full of soft fancies, timorous, and shy ;
Yet high of purpose, and of soul so firm,
That sooner shall you the round world unsphere
Than warp her from the conscious path of right ;
A bright domestic goddess, formed to bless,
And soothe, and succour—oh, most meet to be
The shrined idol of a heart like his.

Two days had elapsed, and the third was already drawing toward its close, since the encounter of the cavalier with his saintly ally ; for the sun, scarce elevated thrice the breadth

of his own disk above the horizon, was now almost perceptibly declining in the west, though he still darted long pencilled rays of light athwart the landscape, from between the folds of gauzelike mist which veiled his splendours from the eye.

One of these straggling beams had found its way into a nook, as sweet as ever poet sung, or fairy haunted. It was an angle in one of those broad green lanes, which form so beautiful a feature in the rural scenery of England. Carpeted with deep unfaded verdure, through which meandered a faint wheel-track; bordered by hedges, so thick and tangled as to resemble natural coppices rather than artificial fences; embowered by the fragrant honeysuckle, and spangled with the dewy flowers of the yet sweeter eglantine; decked with the golden blossoms of the broom, the fringelike fern, and the flaunting bells of the white and crimson

foxgloves ; canopied by the dense umbrage of the broad-leaved sycamore, the gnarled and ivy-mantled oak, or the lighter and more graceful ash ; and watered by a tiny brooklet, that stole along, now on one side, now on the other, of the rarely-trodden path, here tinkling over its many-coloured pebbles with a mirthful music, there silently reflecting the tufted rushes, and the mossy log that spanned its surface with a sylvan bridge—that solitary nook might well have furnished forth a tiring-room for Shakspeare's wild Titania.

Nor, though the days of Puck and Oberon were already numbered with the things that had been, did that lone bower lack its presiding genius ; for on a trunk, cushioned with hoary lichens, and overlooking a crystal basin formed by the rill which undermined its tortuous roots, and had, perchance, in bygone ages, caused its decay and ruin, there sat a female form, love-

liest of the lovely. She was gazing, as at first sight it seemed, Narcissus-like, upon her watery image; but in truth so deeply buried in her own imaginings, that she was no less ignorant of all she looked upon than was the senseless stump on which she leaned so gracefully. She was a girl perhaps of twenty summers; for, looking on her, it had been impossible to reckon save by summers, so sunny was the style of her young beauty. On either side of her white and dazzling forehead, ringlets in rich exuberance, of the deepest auburn—so deep, that, saving where they glittered goldlike in the sunshine, they might have been deemed black—fell off behind her ears, and wantoned down her swanlike neck; while, in the luxury of calm abandonment, her velvet hat, dropped by her side, lay on the grass, its choice plumes ruffling the mirror of the pool. Her eyes were bent so steadfastly upon the waters at her feet,

that it was by the long dark lashes only, pencilled in clear relief against the delicate complexion of her cheek, that they could be judged large, and suited to the character of her most eloquent features. Of an almost marble paleness, with scarce a rosy trace to tell of the pure blood which coursed so warmly through those thousand azure channels that veined her neck and bosom, there was yet a transparency, a glowing hue, in her fair skin, that spoke of all the lively elasticity of health; while to remove a doubt, if doubt could have existed, the sweet curve of that small mouth, woefully prominent, was tinged with the rich hue of the dark red carnation. Though Grecian in their outlines, there yet was more of intellect and energy in the expression of her features, than of that poetical repose which forms the general character of the classic model.

The shape of this fair creature, as she reclined

along her rustic couch, though of voluptuous roundness, was rather slight than full; and the ankle, displayed somewhat too liberally by the disordered draperies of her satin riding-dress, was slender as a sylphid's limb. Her dimpled chin was propped, in attitude of busy thought, on so diminutive a hand, as would alone have proved her pedigree from the unconquered race of Normandy. Nor was the attitude belied by aught of consciousness or coquetry, for all betokened the deep hush of natural and unstudied meditation.

A beautiful white palfrey, with ribboned rein, and velvet housings, which stood unfettered at her side, awaiting, docile and gentle creature, the pleasure of his mistress, pawed, and tossed his head, till the silver bits rang audibly, and uttered once or twice a tremulous impatient neigh, unheeded, at the least, if not unheard.

A vagrant spaniel of the Blenheim breed, with

soft dark eyes, and ears that almost swept the ground—one from a number that had followed the fair girl, and now dozed listlessly upon the grass around her—had been for some time rustling among the dewy bushes, and now sent forth a shrill and clamorous yelping, as pheasant after pheasant whirred up on noisy wings into the higher branches, whence they crowed, with outstretched necks, defiance to their powerless assailant.

Still there was no sign in the demeanour of the lady, to indicate that she had marked the sounds, harmonizing as they did with the spirit of the place and hour, and blending naturally with the low of the distant cattle, the cawing of the homeward rooks, and the continuous hum of the thousand insect tribes which were still disporting themselves in the September sunset, not the less merrily that their little

glass of life had already run even to its latest sands.

But anon a noise arose, which, in itself by no means inharmonious, was not so much attuned to the rural melodies around, but that it jarred discordantly on the ear. It was the clear and powerful voice of a man, venting his feelings as he rode along;—for at times the tramp of a horse might be distinguished, when his hoof struck upon harder soil than common, mingling with the measured tones, as perhaps unconscious of his occupation, the rider recited aloud such passages from the high poets of the day, as were suggested to his memory by all that met his senses. At first the accents were indistinct from distance, and their import quite inaudible; then, as the speaker drew so nigh that his words might partially be understood, the voice ceased altogether; but, after a brief pause, it

again broke forth in the pure poetry of Drummond.

Thrice happy he, who by some shady grove,
Far from the clamorous world, doth live his own !
Though solitary, who is not alone,
But doth converse with that eternal love !
O how more sweet is birds' harmonious moan,
Or the hoarse sobbings of the widowed dove,
Than those smooth whispers near a prince's throne,
Which make good doubtful—

As these words passed his lip, the horseman turned the last angle of the winding lane ; and, for the first time discovering that the free outpourings of his spirit had found a listener, Edgar Ardenne—for the moralist was no other—paused in his sonnet and checked his steed, by a common impulse, and as it seemed a single movement. His eyes flashed joyfully, as they met the large and violet-coloured orbs which the fair girl had raised, at first in simple wonderment, but which now lightened with a gleamy

radiance that he was not slow to construe into delighted recognition.

“ Sibyl—sweet Sibyl!”—

“ Edgar, can it indeed be you?—welcome, oh, welcome home!”—

At once, without a moment’s interval, the words burst forth from either, as they hastened—he with impetuous hurry from his charger, she gathering her ruffled robes about her, and rising from her rustic throne with the unblushing ease of conscious modesty—to manifest their pleasure at this unexpected meeting.

Were they friends, or kindred, or more dearly linked than either by the young ties of holy, unsuspecting, and unselfish love? They met. The formal fashions of the day would scarcely have allowed the gallant to fold even a sister to his bosom. Edgar clasped her not, therefore, in the arms that evidently yearned to do so, but with a polished ease, belied by the flushed

brow, and frame that quivered visibly with eagerness, and first unglowing himself, he raised her white hand to his lips, which dwelt upon it even too fervidly for brotherly affection.

A deep blush glowing, the more remarkably from its contrast to her wonted paleness, over brow and cheek, and visible, though with a fainter hue, even upon her neck, and such brief portion of the bosom as might be descried between the fringes of rich lace, that edged her bodice, she yet expressed not aught of wonder or of reluctance at his familiar greeting. Though the small hand trembled in his grasp with a perceptible and quick emotion, it was not withdrawn; nor, while he gazed upon those eloquent eyes, as steadfastly as though through them he would have read the inmost feelings of the soul that so informed them, did she shrink from his evident, though chastened admiration. A moment or two passed ere either again spoke; it

might be that their passionate feelings were better to be interpreted from silence, than expressed by words; it might be that their hearts were full to overflowing, and that so they dared not to unlock those secret channels, lest they might be led—he into such betrayal of his feelings, as is deemed weak and womanish by the great mass of men, themselves too calculating or too cold to feel at all—she into such disclosure of her soul's treasured secret, as oftentimes is censured, and not perhaps unjustly, as at the least impolitic, if not immodest or unmaidenly.

It was, however, Sibyl, who with the delicate and ready tact peculiar to her sex, first broke the silence, which had endured so long already as to become almost embarrassing; and, as she spoke, her words explained their relative position, although it might even then be doubted whether the full extent of their connexion was as yet divulged.

“I can hardly trust my eyes,” she said, in those low and musical tones, which are indeed an excellent thing in woman, “when they tell me, truant as you are and traitor, that you stand bodily before me. So long have our hearts been rendered sick by hope deferred—so often have we gazed, from peep of morn till the sad close of evening, for your expected—for your promised coming—and gazed but to be disappointed—that now, when you have truly come, we had ceased not to hope indeed and pray, but surely to expect.”

“Oh! Sibyl, did you know how many an anxious thought, how many a bitter pang, these wearisome delays have cost me, you would pity, rather than upbraid—”

“Fair words and flowery, good cousin Edgar,” she replied, with an arch glance, and a light thrilling laugh, “and with such, you

lords of the creation—as in your vanity you style yourselves—deem you can wipe away the heaviest score of broken vows, and perjured promises, from the frail memories of easy and deluded damsels. But, in good sooth, I marvel not that you should slight poor me, when you have questioned nothing, and that, too, after a three years' absence, of your noble father; and when you stand here dallying within a scant mile of his presence, sounding your false excuses into a credulous lady's ear. For shame, sir!—for my part, if I felt it not, then would I feign at least some natural affection.”

“ Wild as thou ever wert, fair Sibyl,” answered Edgar, a beautiful smile playing over his grave features, and revealing a set of teeth even and white as ivory. “ I hoped, when I beheld you so pensive and so melancholy, musing beside yon lovely pool, that years grow-

ing toward maturity might have brought something of reflection to tame those girlish spirits ; but, in good faith, I should have known you better. But am I not assured, were it but by your being here so blithe and beautiful, that all goes well at home ?”

“ Well parried, if not honestly,” still laughing, she replied ; “ and, for your taunts on my demeanour, I defy you !—But help me to my horse, Sir loiterer, and we will homeward ; for I do believe, despite your manifold enormities, that you would fain see those who, to your shame be it spoken, will feel more joy to greet you, than you have shown alacrity to do so much as ask of their well-being. I warrant me, if you had met Sir Henry first, you had not once inquired whether poor I were in existence.”

In another moment the lady was mounted on her white palfrey, and, with the cavalier beside

her bridle-rein, rode toward her home more joyously than she had done for many a month before. Not, however, in loud mirth, nor even in the sprightly raillery which she had adopted on their first meeting, was her happiness divulged to common ears; but her soft eyes, dwelling fondly on the features, long unseen, of her accepted and acknowledged lover, though they were lowered modestly so often as they caught his answering glances,—and the subdued and quiet tones of her melodious voice, as they conversed of old home scenes, and sweet familiar recollections, more endeared to them, all trivial as they were, than loftier memories,—were confirmations, strong as an angel's voice, of her unchanged affection.

After a short ride, rendered shorter yet to them by the enjoyment, for so long a time unused, though not forgotten, of each other's converse—by the sweet consciousness of mutual

love ; and by the full expansion of their feelings, unrestrained by the cold formalities of that most heartless intercourse which men have styled society, and untrammelled by any chains, save those instinctive bonds of pure and delicate propriety, which noble natures ever wear about them in the guise of flowery garlands, gracing while they dignify the motions which they in no respect impede.

After a short ride through the windings of that verdant lane,—here rendered almost gloomy by the shadows of occasional woodlands which it traversed, here running past the door of some secluded cottage, its thatched porch overhung with bowering creepers, and its narrow garden gay with tall hollyhocks and autumnal flowers—here looking forth, from intervals in the tall hedges, over some sunny stubble-field on which the golden shocks stood fair and frequent, or some deep pasture, its

green surface dotted with sleek and comely cattle,—they reached a rustic gate of unbarked timber, woven into fantastic shapes, and through it gained admittance into a demesne, as rich as ever was transmitted by its first winner of the bloody hand to a long line of undegenerate posterity.

Even to the wandering and homeless stranger there is a calm and quiet joy in the stately solitude of an English park,—in its broad velvet lawns, sloping southwardly away, studded with noble clumps, or solitary trees more noble yet, down to the verge of some pellucid lake or brimful river,—in its swelling uplands, waving with broom and fern, meet haunt for the progeny of the timid doe, whence glitter frequently the white stems of the birch, or the red berries of the mountain-ash,—in the wild bellowing of the deer, heard from some rock-ribbed glen, where they have sheltered during the hot noon-tide,—in the cooing of the pigeon, or the re-

peated tap of the green woodpecker,—in the harsh cry of the startled heron, soaring on his broad wings from the sedgy pool, before the intruder's footstep,—in the lazy limp of the pastured hares, and in the whirr of the rising covey. What, then, must be the feelings summoned by the same picture, to the heart of one who hears in every rural sound, and witnesses in every sylvan scene, the melodies that soothed his earliest slumber, and the sights that nursed his youngest meditation? To him these stately solitudes are peopled with a thousand holy recollections;—the step, perchance, of a departed mother still roams beneath those immemorial trees; her musical voice still speaks to his heart audibly, and in the very tones his childhood listened to, when all its cares were hushed;—to him each bosky bourn and twilight dingle has its memory of boyish exploit, each murmuring rill of boyish reverie.

Home—home—hackneyed as is the thought, and time-worn—what a world of treasured sweetness is there in that one word, Home! To the humblest and to the highest—in sorrow and in mirth—to the needy exile as to the successful adventurer—for ever dear, for ever holy—crowded out, perhaps, from the selfish spirit, by the bustle, the tumult, the conflict of the day—but still returning with undiminished force, when the placid influence of night and slumber shall have stilled the fitful fever, and restored to the sullied heart, for one short hour, the purity it knew of yore.

Oh! if there be on the broad face of earth the being that loves not, with an unquenchable and everliving love, the native home—curse him not, when ye meet—he is accursed already. Vindictive men have warred against—ambitious men have sacrificed—and sordid men have sold their countries; but these—ay, each, and all

of these—if we could read their souls, have had their moments of repentant thought, their moments of triumphant fondness. What then must be the feelings of a mind like that of Ardenne—a mind, coupling the severe and disciplined philosophy of schools with the warm and wild romance of a poetic fancy—a mind, which had learned wisdom, without learning vice, amid the fierce pleasures and the fiercer strife of a licentious world—a mind, no less unselfish than it was reasonable and regular—a mind, filled with the beautiful principles of that universal love which is honour, and patriotism, and every shape of virtue—virtue, not cold in itself, as the wicked say, and chilling all things that it touches, but genial, and enlivening, and warm with every generous aspiration. What must have been the feelings of a man endowed with such a mind, returning

to his unforgotten home, from years of restless wandering, in pursuit, not of the idol mammon, not of the phantom fame, but of that high philosophy which is derived from the perusal of men, not books; which is learned not in the solitary chamber, nor by the midnight lamp, but on the tented field, and in the dazzling court; at the banquet and the masque; amid the treacheries of men, and the wilier fascinations of beauty;—what must have been *his* feelings, riding by the bridle of his own betrothed, through the very fields in which he had won, years before, her virgin heart, hastening to the embrace of a father, whom, much as he revered and honoured him, he loved yet more?

—Who may describe that wonderful and deep sensation, that tincture of joy and sorrow, of bitterness and pleasure, which must be mingled to make up the draught of human happiness,

exhibited no less in the gushing tear, than in the glittering smile, in the choked voice and suffocating spasm, than in the flashing eye and the exulting pulse ?

Enough—Ardenne was for the moment happy, absolutely, and, if aught mortal may be called perfect, perfectly happy. The antiquated hall burst on his vision, as he passed a belt of sheltering evergreens, its tall Elizabethan chimneys sending their columns of vaporous smoke far up into the calm heaven ; its diamond-paned oriels glowing like sheets of fire to the reflected sun ; its hospitable porch opening wide to admit stranger or guest alike with kindly welcome ; its freestone terraces with a group of lazy greyhounds basking on the steps, and a score or two of peacocks perched upon the balustrades, like the ornaments of an eastern throne, or strutting to and fro on the broad flagstones in all their pride of gorgeous

plumage. He saw—he had no words—but his gentle companion might perceive his nether lip to quiver with strong emotion, and a tear, unrestrained by selfish pride, to trickle down his manly cheek.

A heavy bell rang out—there was a bustle, and a rush of many servitors, badged and blue-coated men, with hoary heads and tottering limbs—the heirlooms of the family, transmitted, with the ancestral armour and the ancient plate, from sire to son.

With difficulty extricating himself from the familiar greetings of these domestic friends, Ardenne hurried up the steps; but, ere he crossed the threshold, a noble-looking man, far past the prime of life—as might be seen from his long locks already streaked with the wintry hues of age—but vigorous still and active—fell upon his neck with a quick shrill cry—“My son! my son!”—the hot tears gushing from

his eyes ; not that he mourned, but that he did rejoice, as (in the magnificent words of the Greek lyrist) he beheld his chosen offspring, the statelyst of the sons of men.

CHAPTER III.

Minstrel of freedom—England's holiest bard—
His were the electric strains, that spurn control!
That stir with lightning touch a nation's soul,
Filling each heart with aspirations high,
With zeal to do—to suffer—and to die!
With fear of tyrants conquering fear of strife!
With that high love—more strong than love of life—
Which arms may not subdue, nor fetters pine—
The deathless love of liberty divine!

It was a beautiful and tranquil evening; the broad bright hunter's moon was riding through the cloudless firmament, filling the whole expanse of heaven with a radiance so pervading, that the myriads of stars were wellnigh

quenched in her more lustrous glory. It was one of those evenings, on which we cannot gaze without comparing the pure and passionless quiet of the world above with the fierce solitudes, the selfish strife, the angry turmoil of the world around us—one of those evenings which, at any time, must infuse a sentiment of peaceful melancholy into every bosom, even of the wild and worldly, but which has at no time so deep an influence on the spirit, as when contemplated from the near vicinity of some large city. The contrast between the chaste paleness of those celestial lamps, and the ruddy glare which glanced from many a casement,—between the perfect calm aloft, unbroken save by the gentle murmur of the wind, and the confused uproar below, rife with the din of commerce, the dissonance of mingled tongues, and now a distant scream, and now a burst of unmelodious laughter,—must needs impress more strongly on the mind than aught of homily or lecture, that

contempt for the mortal world, and the base things its tenants,—that ardent and inexplicable yearning after something of truer and more substantial happiness than we can here conceive,—that wish for “wings like a dove, that we might flee away, and be at rest,” which constitutes, perhaps, the most essential difference, as exhibited on earth, between ourselves and the yet lower animals, content to fatten and to perish.

Such was, not improbably, the strain of thought into which the aspect of the night had led one—a man not yet advanced beyond the prime of life, of elegant though low proportions, who stood gazing heavenward, as he leaned against the low wall of a pleasant garden, which girt about with its tall edges of clipped box or hornbeam, its gay parterres, and its bowery walks, a fair suburban villa, situate in what was then, as now, termed Aldersgate, though at that period not a densely peopled thoroughfare, but a long straggling street, half town, half

country, with leafy elms lining the public way, and many a cultivated nursery, and many a grassy paddock, intervening between the scattered dwellings of the retired trader, or the leisure-loving man of letters.

The countenance of this person, as it was directed with a pensive wistful gaze toward the melancholy planet, receiving the full flood of its lustre, was singular for softness and attraction. He wore no covering on his head, and his luxuriant tresses of light brown hair, evenly parted on the foretop, hung down in silky waves quite to his shoulders. The hues of his complexion, delicately coloured as a woman's, and the somewhat sleepy expression of his full gray eye, accorded well with the effeminate arrangement of his locks, and indeed entitled him to be considered eminently handsome; for there was so much of intellect and of imagination in the forehead, low but expansive, and so many

lines of thought about the slightly sunken cheeks, now faintly traced and transient, but which would, with the advance of years, increase to furrows, that the softer traits, while adding to the beauty, detracted nothing from the dignity and manhood of his aspect. His form, though slight and small, was yet compact and muscular, affording promise of that powerful agility which is paramount even to superior strength, in the use and skill of weapons. Neatly clad enough in a loose coat of dark gray cloth, with vest and hose of black, cut plainly, without lace or fringe, and above all, not wearing even the common walking-sword, at that time carried throughout Europe by all of gentle rank, the meditative loiterer would have excited little or no attention among the greater body of mankind, ever caught by the glitter, and deluded by the glare, but careless, as it is undiscerning, of true merit, when harbingered to

its opinion by nought of pride or circumstance. He might have been an artisan, or merchant of the city, but that the slouched hat lying, with a staff of ebony, beside him on the wall, distinguished him from the flat-capped dwellers to the east of Temple-bar ; while his hands, which were delicately white, and tender as a lady's, showed that they had never been exercised in the ungentle labour of a mechanic calling. But, stronger even than these tokens, there was that vivid and inexplicable impress of exalted genius, that looking forth of the immortal spirit from the eyes, that strange mixture of quiet melancholy with high enthusiasm, pervading all his features, which must have made it evident, to any moderately keen observer, that figure or decoration could be but of small avail, when considered as the mere appendages to such a mind.

He stood awhile in silence, though his lips

moved at intervals, perusing the bright wanderers of heaven with a gaze so fixed and yearning, as though his spirit would have looked into the very tabernacle and abode of the Omnipotent. At length he spoke articulately, in a voice deep, slow, majestic, and melodious, but in the unconscious tones of one who meditates or prays aloud, without reference or respect to aught external.

“ Beautiful light !” he said, “ beautiful lamp of heaven !—what marvel, that the blinded and benighted heathen should ignorantly worship thee? What marvel, that a thousand altars, in a thousand ages, should have sent up their fumes of adoration unto thee, the mooned Ash-taroth,—unto thee, the Ephesian Diana,—unto thee, the nightly visitant of the young-eyed Endymion? What marvel, that to those who knew not, neither had they heard of the One, Uncreate, Invisible, Eternal, thou shouldst have

seemed meet Deity to whom to bend the knee,—
thou first-born offspring of his first-created gift !
thou blessed emanation from his own ethereal
glory—what wonder, when I, his humble fol-
lower, his ardent, though unworthy worshipper,
—when I, an honest though an erring Christian,
do strive in vain to wean my heart from love
of thee ; indoctrinating so my spirit, that I may
kiss the rod with which, I am assured too well,
HE soon will chasten me, in changing the fair
light, that glorious essence in which my soul
rejoiceth, for one black, everlasting, self-
imparted midnight ? Yet so it shall be. A
few more revolutions of these puissant planets,
—a few more mutations of the sweet-returning
seasons—and to me there shall be no change
again on earth for ever !—no choice between
the fairest and the foulest !—no difference of
night or day !—no charm in the rich gorgeous-
ness of flowery summer, above the sere and

mournful autumn!—no cheery aspect in the piled hearth of winter!—no sweet communion with the human eye compassionate!—no intercourse with the great intellects of old, dead, yet surviving still in their sublime and solid pages!”

He paused for a space, as though he were too deeply moved to trust his thoughts to language; but, after a moment, drawing his hand across his eyes—

“But if it be so,” he continued, “as I may not doubt it will—if his fiat be pronounced against me, of dark corporeal blindness—what duty yet remains?—what, but to labour that the blindness be not mental also?—what, but to treasure up even now, during my brief-permitted time, such stores of hoarded wisdom, as may in part suffice, like to the summer-gathered riches of the industrious and thrifty bee, to nourish and to cheer me at the coming

of my sunless season?—what, but to profit, even as best I may, by those good opportunities which his great mercy hath vouchsafed to me; to sow the seed even now, during the fertile autumn, that by his blessing it may swell and germinate during the brumal darkness of the approaching winter, and in his good time give forth to light a crop improved and gloriously surpassing that from which it sprung?—what, but to give thanks alway, and to praise the tender-heartedness and love of Him, to whom it were no harder task to plunge the mind in lunatic and senseless stupor, than to seal up the fount of light to the poor eye,—of Him who, giving all the thousand blessings I enjoy, judges it fitting to deprive me but of one, haply that, from its single loss, others may fructify, and bear good harvest to my use?—Wherefore, oh! merciful and mighty one, be it unto me as thou willest, and thou only!

And, oh! above all things be it unto me, as now, so alway, humbly to cry, and happily, 'Thy will be done!' "

Even as the pious scholar brought his meditations to a close, the footsteps of one advancing, though still unseen, through the mazes of the shrubbery, were heard upon the crisp and crackling gravel; and, ere he had resumed his hat, which was steeple-crowned and of the puritanic fashion, the intruder made his appearance, in the guise of an humbly-clad and grave-eyed serving-man, who announced, in phrase ungarnished by much form of reverence towards his master, the presence of three gentlemen within, praying to speak with him.

"In faith," good Andrew, returned the other, "'tis an unseasonable hour for visitants.—Who be these gentles?"

"Master Cromwell is among them," answered the attendant; "but of the rest I know

not, save that I heard the name of St. John pass between them. They await your coming in the summer parlour."

Without further query or reply, the scholar, as if satisfied that his presence was indeed required, traversed the garden with quick steps, and entering the house, a small but cheerful dwelling, through an entrance hung round with maps and charts of statistics or chronology, passed to the chamber in which his guests expected him. It was a pleasant room, with a bay-window looking upon the garden, but cheaply decorated with hangings of green serge, to which a splendid organ, by the first maker of the day, and a choice collection of rare books, several of the number being papyri of great worth, afforded a remarkable contrast. In the recess formed by the window there stood a reading-desk, curiously carved in old black oak, with cushions of green velvet

somewhat the worse for wear, supporting a noble folio bible in the Greek text of Geneva. The table was loaded with a heterogeneous mass of books and papers,—an original manuscript of the *Bacchæ* of Euripides, reposing on a Hebrew copy of the Septuagint, and a stray duodecimo of Petrarch's sonnets marking the place at which the reader had closed the pages of a huge tome of controversial divinity; while on a marble slab, opposite the chimney, lay a couple of foils, with their wire masks and gloves, partially hidden by the draperies of a threadbare mantle of black velvet, a violin, a guitar, some written music; and, peering out from beneath the whole, the iron basket-hilt and glittering scabbard of a heavy broadsword.

In this, the student's sanctum, he found the three gentlemen who had been announced, evidently engaged in whispered conversation of deep import, for they did not, till he had stood

for a moment or two almost beside them, perceive the presence of their host, who had thus ample opportunity of examining their persons by the light of a brazen lamp, of antique form, with several burners, which hung from the ceiling immediately above the abstracted group.

Nearly opposite the door, with his searching eyes fixed upon another of the company, who was speaking with considerable emphasis, though in an under tone, stood the same individual who had assisted Ardenne on the night of his adventure near to Royston,—wearing the very garb in which he had appeared on that occasion, save that for his riding-boots he had substituted a pair of coarse gray woollen stockings drawn tight to the mid-thigh, with ill-blackened shoes of calfskin laced to the instep, and bearing neither rose nor buckle.

The speaker to whose words he lent so careful heed, was a tall and slender person, handsomely though gloomily attired in a full suit of black, with silken hose and velvet cloak to match, a mourning rapier hanging at his side, though evidently worn for fashion rather than for use. His countenance, though not of pleasant favour, much less such as could be termed handsome, was nevertheless one from which men could not easily withdraw their eyes, possessing as it did attributes of unquestionable talent, though accompanied by an expression which the dullest must wish to fathom. His eyes, which were large and black, had a bright and flashing glance, when under the influence of excitement, almost painful to the beholder; while a continual and, as it would seem, involuntary sneer sat on his thin and writhing lip. His hair, black as the raven's wing, was long and curling, though

not worn after the flowing fashion of the cavaliers; but the most remarkable trait of his aspect was the immovable gloom, which overshadowed his dark saturnine features with a cloud so constant, that it has been recorded of him, that seldom, even in his moments of hilarity, was he beheld to smile.

The remaining person of the trio was a finer and more comely man than either of his comrades; fairly proportioned, though not above the middle height; with a brow rather full than lofty, a quick and penetrating eye, and an intelligent expression, thoughtful rather than grave, and with no touch of sternness or morosity on his noble features, lighted up as they were from time to time by a smile of singular and cheerful sweetness. He was habited, as became a gentleman, in a rich garb of maroon-coloured velvet, his costly sword suspended from a scarf of good white

taffeta, and a white feather in his beaver; the whole, though plain enough, if compared with the luxurious bravery of the cavaliers,—whose dresses would oftentimes have been too cheaply rated at a year's income of their patrimony,—conveying an idea of absolute magnificence when viewed beside the simple habiliments of his fellow-visitors.

After he had surveyed this group for a few moments' space, satisfied apparently with the survey, the master of the house stepped forward, startling them slightly by his motion, and cutting short their converse.

“Give you good evening, Master Cromwell,” he said, addressing himself to the most slovenly apparelled of the company—“it shames me to have caused you wait my coming.”

“Not so, good sir,” returned the other—“it is we rather, who have trespassed, on your studies; coming thus at an hour surely unsea-

sonable. But, of a truth, I had forgotten—I pray you, Master Milton,” (for it was no other than the immortal poet, who had deplored, in such heartfelt yet unrepining language, the advent of that dread calamity which had already been predicted to him, by the first physicians of the day, as the sure consequence of his persisting in his arduous and unremitting labours)—“I pray you, Master Milton, know these most worthy and god-fearing gentlemen—this”—motioning with his hand toward the taller and more gloomy figure—“this, my good friend Master Oliver St. John—and this—my well-beloved and trusty cousin, honest John Hampden!”

“Of a truth, Master Cromwell,” replied the poet, (in those days better known, by his magnificent and stately prose, for a controversial writer of unequalled power, than by the slight though beautiful effusions of poetry

which hitherto he had cast forth merely as the erratic sports of leisure moments, stolen from graver studies, and not yet as the sublime continuous soarings of his unrivalled genius)—“Of a truth, Master Cromwell, I owe you more of thanks than I am wont to offer, that you have brought to my poor dwelling these, the most constant and the noblest cultivators of that fair vineyard, to the renewal and reform of which I too, an humble fellow-tiller, have devoted my unworthy labours !”

And he turned to the companions of his friend, esteemed already by all the worshippers of freedom, as the wisest, the purest, and the best of her adorers—as the pilots who might alone be trusted to hold the shattered helm of state aright, amid the terrors, the confusion, and the storm of the approaching crisis—as the champions who had already reared the banner of undaunted opposition to all that was

corrupt, or bigoted, or arbitrary in religious or in civil rule — as the leaders who, above all others, were endowed with the talent, and worth, and, more than these, with the unflinching energy, to wring the iron sceptre of usurped prerogative from the high hand that wielded it with such despotic sway! He greeted them with words savouring more of courteous deference, than of that plain-spoken and uncompromising brevity, on the use of which his party prided themselves so deeply, in their intercourse of man with man; there was, however, nothing of vain or worldly adulation, much less of that fawning sycophancy, that low servile manworship, for which the courtiers of the day were so deservedly condemned by the stern puritans, in his frank though reverential bearing.

After a few seconds spent in civilities, which were accepted, as indeed they were intended,

for the befitting homage of one surpassing intellect to others, though in a different sphere of not inferior merit—homage, degrading not the giver, while it added to the real dignity of the receiver—the party fell into the ordinary demeanour of men familiar, if not with the persons, at least with the minds and principles, each of the others ; and the conversation flowed as quietly on the accustomed topics of the time, as though the speakers had been in the daily habit of mingling in the same social intercourse. There was, however, not only nothing of levity or licence, but nothing of common import or every-day occurrence, in the interchanged ideas of those high spirits, devoted, one and all, to the same pursuit of patriotism, and equally engrossed in the quick-succeeding incidents of fearful and pervading interest, which rendered every hour of that eventful year a great historic epoch.

“Have ye received aught new from Ireland,” inquired the poet—“ye of the lower house—touching this perilous and damnable rebellion?”

“Ay, of a surety, have we!” answered Cromwell; “full confirmation—full, ay, and overflowing all that we had heard before!”

“All Ulster is in one light blaze!” cried St. John, his dark eye flashing with indignant fire—“the forts all captured; and that most subtle villain, Phelim O’Neil, wading knee-deep—with thirty thousand fanatic and phrensied papists—knee-deep in Protestant and English gore!—Connaught and Leinster revelling in red-handed massacre, and the five counties of the Pale arrayed by the Lords Justices to quell the insurrection, united to their brother rebels!”

“None may conceive the horrors—none may enumerate the sufferings, or recount the wretched

sufferers !” continued Hampden, a deep shade of melancholy settling down on his fine lineaments. “At the least reckoning, twenty thousand of our brethren, men, women, and children, yea, the very infants at the breast, have perished ! No insult, no atrocity that Romish perfidy could plan, or fiendish cruelty perform,—no last extremity of famine, cold, or torture,—has been spared to their defenceless victims by the barbarian Irish—their very priests setting the torch of midnight conflagration to the planter’s dwelling, and hounding on their furious followers to massacre and havoc !”

“But of the king, fair sirs ?”

“Well hast thou said, John Milton,” interrupted the harsh voice of Cromwell, before the other had concluded his inquiry. “Well hast thou said, and truly ! ’tis of that man of Belial !—ay, root and branch of him, and his self-seeking carnal cavaliers !”

“It is, we fear, too true,” said Hampden, in reply to the bewildered looks of the anxious auditor,—“it is, we fear, too true! O’Neil, in his dark proclamation, boasts openly his own authority from the great seal of Scotland! Sir William St. Leger, trusty alike and brave, hath, as we learn, dismissed his levies, and laid down the arms he had assumed on the first outbreak of the rebels, at sight of a commission, with Charles Stuart’s manual sign, held by that murderous bigot, Lord Musquerry!”

“And last, not least,” sneered Oliver St. John, “Macmahon hath confessed, at shrewd solicitation of the rack, that the original scheme of this rebellion was brought to Ireland, from our gracious king and governor, by Dillon, and the members of the late committee!”

“Of a truth,” said Cromwell, in reply to the words of his milder cousin,—“of a truth there may be cause for *fear*, ay, and for grief—yet,

wherefore? Verily 'tis a hard thing to rejoice—to rejoice in the midst of slaughter and abomination! yet who shall deem, or boast himself to know of that which is to come, save He that holdeth the end—I say the end and the accomplishment of all things in the hollow of his hand? But I will tell ye this—yea!—but mistake me not—this will I avouch to ye, that *I* fear not, but do rejoice! 'Tis a sad thing, in truth, that an anointed king, even a king in Israel, should arm his hand against his people, and turn away his countenance from the well-beloved of the Lord, inclining his ear likewise unto the idolatries of the beast, and unto the charmings of the Moabitish woman; yea, and pour out the vials of his wrath upon the heads of the sons of righteousness! But, of a surety, it is not for a man to judge, save thus—for I will speak, even as it is put into my mouth—save *thus*—that to a man fore-weaponed and forewarned, less dangerous is

an open enemy, yea, if he be mightier by ten-fold, than one who lurketh privily, beneath the vesture of a friend, looking in secret whom he may devour !”

“Forewarned, indeed, ye are,” replied the poet, musingly ; “and your own fault ’twill be, if ye be not fore-weaponed likewise ; for, in good sooth, I do believe the lives of none are safe—the lives and liberties of none who dare uplift their voices in defence of England’s constitution, or the church’s purity !”

“And is it not to this end,” cried Oliver,—“is it not to this end that we are watching, even now, with our loins girded, and our lights burning, unto the protection of those that are defenceless, and unto the enlightening of those that sit in darkness ?—And is it not to this end that we have now come to thee, John Milton, trusting to gain a strong ally—even a valiant, and a heart-whole, and a spirit-stirring soldier—seek-

ing to learn from thee—so far as it is for man to learn of man—yet, neither confident in worldly wisdom, which is ignorance before the Lord—nor relying altogether on the judgment of a fellow worm, howsoever excellent he may be in the gifts of carnal knowledge—seeking, I say, to learn from thee, the character and principles of one, with whom we do believe that you so long have communed, as to know the thoughts of his heart, ay, and to interpret the workings of his inward man ?”

“Such is, indeed, our object in this untimely visit,” continued Hampden, while St. John fixed his searching eye upon the beautiful features of the listener, with keen and interested scrutiny. “We have but now received intelligence of the decease of that shrewd counsellor and honest patriot, Elias Chaloner, the fellow-townsmen of my worthy cousin Cromwell, and lately knight for the godly town of Huntingdon ; and, with

this same intelligence, the great charge has been laid upon us, by the zealous burghers of the place, of commending to their choice a person who shall honourably fill the seat of him that is departed.”

“And how—you would ask John Milton,” Cromwell broke in—“for I can read the query on your brow—how, you would ask, can you assist us in this matter? Verily—*thus* for it hath been suggested to our souls, when we were seeking out the Lord in prayer; yea, wrestling with him in the spirit, that he should guide us to a sure election—it was, I tell you truth, I do profess—borne in upon the ears of our minds, as with an audible and spoken voice—ye shall call to aid the man, even the young man, Edgar Ardenne—”

“With whom,” interrupted St. John, evidently weary of the prolix verbose haranguing of the other,—“with whom, as we are well as-

sured, you, master Milton, have mingled much in foreign travel, having thereby good opportunity to judge of his opinions, and to learn his heart. We would hear from you, therefore, worthy sir, whether this gentleman of high extraction, born of a race devotedly, I had well-nigh said *slavishly*, loyal—whether this gentleman be indeed, as we would wish to find him, a firm, uncompromising lover of his country; one who would pledge himself, and keep his plight religiously, to advance the views and serve the interests of our party. May it please you, tell us, fully, what of yourself you know, and what may be your judgment, of this your fellow-traveller—and above all, whether he may be wrought, and by what means, to further our purposes ?”

“For years,” replied the poet, after a moment’s pause, “have I been wont to read the living minds of men, with even more of study

than I have expended on their embalmed and written thoughts—for years!—and never, I can say it honestly and freely, for I do believe I know his inmost inspirations even as I am conscious of my own—never have I found, or even read of, such a head, combined with such a heart, as that of Edgar Ardenne : a worshipper of wisdom, of liberty, of truth, purer and far more fervently devoted, than the great spirits of the old republics ! a scholar in the study, and that too of the ripest ; an orator in the forum, strong, stirring, and persuasive ; a soldier in the field, well tried, and as well proven ; an adorer of all that is beautiful, but one who sees no beauty save in virtue ; a Christian, fervent and sincere, yet tolerant, and of much charity :—ambitious, but ambitious only to do good ! If ever there was born a man wholly unselfish, that man is Edgar Ardenne. Such—and on my judgment well may you rely—such is the man

whom you would take into your counsels. Gain him, then, gain him, if ye may—for certainly as Edgar Ardenne could achieve aught to benefit his country, though every hope, every feeling, every passion of his soul were listed to oppose it, so certainly would he tread hope, feeling, passion, into the very dust beneath his feet. He has a head so clear, he cannot fail to *see* the right; he has a heart so true, he would not fail—though at the price of all he holds most dear—to *follow* it. Beware, however, beware, if ye decide to gain him; how ye show aught of doubt, much less suspicion!—proffer to him the seat for Huntingdon untrammelled! say not a word of party—not a word of opposition to the court—make ye not one condition—ask not one pledge!—for had ye heaven itself to tender him, and were to tender it, so *bribing* him—ay were it even to act well—my life! he would refuse even heaven.—If, therefore,

ye can resolve unpledged to trust him, seek not to sound his views—for as well might ye assay to fathom the most central depths of ocean; seek not to bind his actions—for as well might ye go forth to chain the subtile and pervading lightning; but proffer to him in plain terms the seat, at the free choice of the burghers—and if he do accept it, as well I trust he will, be sure there is no man in England that better knows the duties of a member in the Commons house of Parliament, or trulier will discharge them !”

“ You have described,” replied the calm and meditative Hampden—“ you have indeed described a man, such as there are but few, this side the grave ! your words, too, tally well with the surmises I have formed from his known actions.”

And would you then,” asked the moody St. John, “ set so great a matter on the casting of

a die? Do you not know that even now we have but a majority, not overstrong, nor over certain—that many have already been won, or put to silence—that Hyde and his moderate partisans daily gain strength, and only lack occasion to join the court in open and unblushing servitude?—know you not that Falkland wavers, and that if he go over, ten votes, at least, will instantly apostatize? and would you then elect this cavalier, for such in truth he is, on vague hopes and uncertain indications?”

“I said not so,” replied Hampden, quickly—
“I said not so, but only that I believe him wise and honest.—Further I will say now, that if, on any terms, we shall decide to recommend him to the choice of the electors, my voice is for so doing with nothing of restriction. If he be honest, it needs not to bind him by a promise—if otherwise, ’twere madness to suppose that promises will bind him. But on this

matter we will speak more anon—we have already trespassed over long upon the leisure and the patience of our honourable host.”

St. John replied not ; and Cromwell, who had perhaps made up his mind already, had fallen into a long and rambling exposition of some doctrinal point, wholly remote from the subject in question, to which Milton listened with a tranquil smile playing about his lip, and with the air apparently of discovering what was the meaning, if there indeed were any, of the wild and ill-digested oratory of the member for Cambridge, at this time just beginning to attract the notice of the house, though no one could, perhaps, assign a cause for his increasing influence.

For a short space, the others spoke apart, warmly, though in an under tone—Hampden, as it seemed, urging on his grave confederate some dubious and unpalatable measure ; the

energy of his manner gradually rising, while the opposition of his friend waxed fainter, until the habitual sneer departed from his lip, and the accustomed cloud partially yielded to an opener and more cheery aspect.

“Be it so!” he said, at length, raising his voice, as the discussion was finished by his assent—“Be it so, if you will, and, in faith, I believe you are in the right on’t. Now, Master Cromwell,” he continued, turning toward him as he spoke, “it lacks but a scant hour of midnight, and our host’s oil, I trow, is wont to lend its light to purposes of more importance, than our further converse. Give you good night, fair sir,” he added, with a short inclination to the poet, as gathering his cloak about him he led his comrades, after brief ceremony, into the moon-lit streets; while he whom he had last addressed, applied himself in solitary diligence to the exercise of his

pen,—slight instrument of mightiest powers, whether for good or evil, and, in the hand of the philosopher, prime mover of more potent revolutions than its dread rival and confederate, the mortal sword.

CHAPTER IV.

Oh what more blest than that serene repose,
Which steeps the soul forespent with foreign woes,
What time we turn, our weary wanderings o'er,
To the old homestead, thence to roam no more,
And stretch our limbs in calm luxurious rest,
On the dear bed our careless childhood press'd.

CATULLUS. (*Free Translation.*)

NONE know, but those who have, for years, been wanderers from the paternal roof,—whether of choice or of necessity it matters not—who have for years been sojourners, not dwellers, on the broad desert earth—who, in the midst of

friends almost, perhaps, as dear as those who girt as with a magic cestus the unforgotten fire-side of their childhood, have craved with an insatiate and yearning appetite the well-known aspect of the old home-places—who have languished for a father's blessing, a mother's wistful eye, a sister's holy kiss—who have felt, with the patriotic Syrian, that "Abana and Pharphar, rivers of Damascus," are truly to the exile "better than all the waters of Israel;"—none know, but these, the deep calm happiness of being once again the centre of that sweet domestic circle—of receiving the fond welcome of every living thing—ay, even to the household dog, or superannuated horse, that yelps or whinnies in the fulness of his recognition—of lying down to rest beneath the very curtains, and on the very bed, which had so often wooed them to repose, before they knew the bitterness of sin or sorrow.

Fully indeed, and far more sensibly than it is tasted by the common pilgrim of life's journey, did this impression of tranquil bliss pervade the breast of Ardenne, as he leaned, gazing upon the familiar landscape, from out the open casement of his chamber,—that chamber, which had never for a moment faded from his memory, with its oaken wainscoting and faded tapestries—its angular recesses, peopled by his youthful fantasy with lurking shapes of terror—its pleasant seats in the deep bay windows—its brazen-handled cabinets of quaint device—its bed with carved tester, and dark hangings—and, more than all, its ebon desk with the velvet-bound and silver-studded bible, whence his long-lost and long-regretted mother had lessoned him so lovingly while he was yet a boy.

The moonlight lay upon the velvet park, and tufted elms, as though it loved to sleep among that peaceful scenery; and if, at intervals, it

shone reflected from the surface of some quiet water, it lingered even there with a half-shadowed lustre, not flashing out with the bright gleams of gorgeous sunshine, but calmly harmonizing with the spirit of the place and hour. So clear, however, was the mellow light, that the graceful attitudes of the slumbering deer might be distinguished on the open lawns, while the pinion of the gliding owl was seen to glance against the massy shadows of the surrounding forest.

Yet now, although he gazed upon all that was most beautiful of natural scenery, all that was most endeared to him by boyish recollections—although he was surrounded by the very objects that he had most earnestly desired to see—although he was at the very point, which he but yesterday would have esteemed the summit of fruition—he was not happy. It is true, that he had found in her, on whom his

mind had dwelt most fondly and most frequently during his absence, the very being he had loved so fervently of yore—bearing no traces of the years which had elapsed, save in the ripening of her mind to excellent maturity, and in the rounding of her sylph-like figure into the exquisite proportions of young womanhood! It is true, that the father, whom he had honoured and obeyed with that old-fashioned filial reverence, which—ill betide the change!—has long since passed away, together with the diamond-hilted rapiers, and the somewhat formal courtesy of our progenitors, had welcomed him to his affections,—a man yet in the prime of intellectual vigour! It is true, that he had brought back to his native land a heart untainted by the follies and the sins of foreign countries; a mind well satisfied, not by the baseless arguments of boyish prejudice, but by the strong convictions of experience, that his

own earth-fast island was indeed the home best calculated for the seekers of that sweet domestic quietude, that fireside, church-going happiness—that calm enjoyment of the duties, the labours, and the pleasures of a country life, blent, as these ever are, with a romantic taste for the green fields and slumbering woodlands, the gentle river and the smooth hillside—which have, at all times, formed a feature so distinctive in the English character! But it is no less true, that, even at the moment when his hand might have been said to grasp all that his soul desired, his spirit was disturbed, and his heart ill at ease.

It were perhaps the wisest, as it surely were the happiest, course, for mortals to “take no heed for the morrow.” Yet, in a strict sense, obedience to this injunction is perhaps impossible—impossible at least to any man endowed with enough of intellect and mental vigour to

perceive the connexion between present causes and eventual effects—to foresee with prescient sagacity the crop which will spring up to-morrow from the seed laid in the ground to-day!—For who could sit at ease, appreciating the full quality of each delicious viand, and pleasantly debating on the flavour of each fragrant wine, knowing that the sword of Damocles was swinging by a single hair—and that too yielding at every instant to the weight—above his head?

Had it not been for this—had it been possible for Ardenne to seal up his eyes, and close his ears, against the evidence of what to-morrow must bring forth—had he lacked the wisdom to discover the future destinies of England, her vitals, even now convulsed by the first throes of the incipient earthquake, or the patriotism to sympathize with the afflictions which, as that wisdom taught him, must, ere another year

befall his country—he might have surrendered himself to momentary pleasure, careless or ignorant of the approaching woe! And so rare of occurrence, and so brief when they do occur, are the periods, during human life, even of comparative happiness,—perhaps, had he so done, he had been able to look back in after days to more of sunny hours than he could count among the strange and mingled incidents of his eventful life. But, constituted as he was, it was not in his power to fix his gaze on the bright present aspect of the things around him, without observing the huge melancholy clouds which were already rising up in the political horizon, threatening to overshadow with their gloomy pall, and perhaps to overwhelm, in the wild tempest they must soon discharge, the feeble shallop of his fortunes, together with the stronger vessel of the constitution.

At an early period of his life a visiter of south-

ern lands, where he had wandered, not to mark alone the sunny skies and desolated fields, the ruined temples and the beautiful cascades, but to muse on the conditions of the nations once so powerful, and so degraded now; to ponder on their rise and fall; to draw deep lessons of the future from the contemplation of the past; he had learned to cherish liberty the more from having witnessed—if not himself endured—the wrongs, the misery, and the oppression, of unlimited authority. Summoned of late by rumours, rife throughout the world, of present disagreement and of public strife between the King and Parliament of his own country, he had returned to England at the instigation of his natural sense of duties which forbade him to expend his energies of heart and hand in the service of a foreign prince, when both might be required to better the cause of liberty or loyalty, no less than at the dictates of those natural affections

which, sooner or later, will point, as surely as the magnetic needle to the north, toward the home of childhood. While on the journey all his thoughts had been of joy—of that serene and moderate happiness, which makes the days flow onward, like a broad and tranquil river, fertilizing some fair plain, rich with the hopes of thousands—beautiful, but with an indescribable and unromantic beauty—presenting none of those wild charms, those scenes at once sublime and lovely to the eye, which mark the course of far-famed torrents amid the savage glens of moorland, moss, and mountain—but leaving on the mind a mingled sentiment of gratitude and bliss that will be fresh and vivid, when the sterner memory of its rival shall have yielded to oblivion. His spirit had looked forward to a long perspective of sunshining years—years not to be degraded by the selfish sloth of luxury; not to be wasted in the mere sports of the field—which useful, ay, and ennobling in their tend-

encies, when partaken but as a relief to grave and solid duties, so surely brutalize if they be exalted to a daily occupation ; not to be dreamed away in apathetic musings and would-be philosophy, but to be dignified by high and patriotic labours, by the cultivation of the sciences and arts, by the promotion of public virtue, and domestic worth, to be enlivened by the gay communion of the noble and the good ; to be softened by the sweet charities, the endearing ties, the holy sympathies, that clasp within their pale the members of a happy family, and to be closed, at length, by a calm deathbed, amid weeping friends, and a grave beneath the elms of the ancestral churchyard, still to be decked with flowers, and pointed out to far posterity as the long home of one whose life had been a course to which death had but brought the consummation of unbending honour.

Such, when the chalky cliffs looked white and lofty, such were the fond anticipations, the ima-

ginations never perhaps to be realized, which poured their gilded halo round the heart of Ardenne; and when he felt his foot once more securely planted on the parent soil, when all those gushing influences of mingled ecstasy and tenderness swept in an overwhelming torrent over his every sense, he deemed that all his hopes were on the point of being gratified, that he was indeed about to be the happiest of men. The rumours of evil seemed to fade away; the menaces of political discord, perchance even of civil strife, to mutter only at a distance, if not unheard, at least unworthy to create solicitude; the fears that would at times arise unbidden, clouding with darker shades the bright views of his mental painting, were all forgotten. And when he arrived, as he had done that night, at the dear home of his boyhood—when he perceived the mighty pleasure that lightened forth from every feature of

his admiring father—when he found himself revelling in the manifest affections of his destined bride, and knew that she partook of the same rapture, and in no less degree,—he for a while abandoned his whole soul to the tide of feeling, he suffered himself to be carried away by his enjoyment of the present, careless and fearless of the future; he felt, perhaps for the first time of his life, during those brief hours, that elastic buoyancy of temper which seems to tread the earth with winged steps, about to soar aloft, insensible to aught that may depress, reckless of all that may oppose; that rapt intoxication of the spirit, which is succeeded so invariably by the contrary extreme of listless, sad despondency, that in the northern parts of Britain it has given rise to a pervading superstition, to an undoubting creed, that such is the forerunner and the omen, not of a causeless gloom, but of a coming evil.

However this may be, it nevertheless is certain that scarcely had Ardenne retired from that delicious intercourse to the seclusion of his own apartment, ere the exhilaration, which had almost surprised himself while he indulged it, gave place, first, to an uncertain sense of restlessness, then to a consciousness of some impending evil increasing in distinctness, moment after moment, till it assumed at length the shape of an anxiety, if not a fear—positive, well-defined, and, alas ! but too well grounded. Nothing, indeed, but the whirl of mingled sensations leaving room for nought of serious meditation, could have, even thus far, blinded Ardenne to the difficulties and the dangers of his future course. The boasted loyalty of his forefathers,—their fond devotion, stronger almost than life, to the king, not as a person, but as a portion, and that the most important, of the state,—their orthodox and sturdy zeal, condemn-

ing all as sectaries and fanatics, who differed in the least from the established canons of the church,—their prejudiced affection for all that was antique, even for antique error!—their holding up all those who would improve or alter, with the most diffident and sparing hand, as innovators on the good old times, as levellers of rank and order, as iconoclasts of the holy constitution, as traitors to their monarch, to their country, to their God!

All these, he could not but remember, had been the principles impressed upon his dawning intellect as the very elixir of political wisdom, as the examples which must point the steps of every Ardenne; as the dogmata, for the maintenance of which he must, if ever called upon to do so, rejoicingly expend his fortune and his blood!—All these, he could not but foresee, must still, according to all human calculation, be the favourite maxims of his father, who—as

he felt in contradiction of those hopes which, even in spite of hope, he knew unfounded—would be too like to deem the slightest deviation from the footsteps of his idols, as the worst apostacy!—the most respectful opposition to the arbitrary will of the misguided sovereign, as flat rebellion!—the most moderate interference in behalf of liberal views and privileges of the people, as a banding, against the legitimate aristocracy of the land, with all that was low and sordid and degraded!—too like, in short, to deem the part, which Edgar felt already to be the only one he could in honour or in honesty espouse, a base abandonment of his natural position, a shameful departure from the principles and virtues of his race, a crime not to be atoned for; even by exclusion from his heart, and expulsion from the home of his fathers! And had he been able even heretofore, and at a distance, to close his eyes against this fatal

certainty, he must indeed have been both blind and deaf of heart, had he not marked the words of blasting sarcasm—of fierce and fiery hatred, which flashed forth as oft as any casual mention intervened of those who had stood forth to check the headlong declination of the English church toward dreaded popery, or the more rapid increase of prerogative toward absolute and autocratic sway. But they had not escaped him! although unnoted, or at least unremarked, amid the free and flowing conversation of that first evening, and unable for the time to dash his most unusual exuberance of animal spirits, they had sunk deep into his heart; and now they rose in long array against him, ghastly and gloomy shapes, reproaching him with his unnatural and foolish joy, and pointing to an endless course of tribulation and of sorrow. Nor was this all!—though this had been enough to overshadow a temperament more sanguinely inclined than that

of Edgar Ardenne, determined as he was to follow that which he himself should deem the wise, the upright, and the honourable way of action ; though such should be avenged by the prostration of all his fancy's idols—by the ruin of his fortune—by the blighting of his nearest and dearest aspirations—and, more intolerable far than all beside, by the forfeiture of that high opinion which his merit had induced, and the frustration of that just expectance which his promise had excited in the bosom of his friends and kinsmen.

Nor was this all !—For, as he pondered now in the lone stillness of the night, as he reviewed with a dispassionate keen-sighted judgment the occurrences of the past day—as he recurred to every word which had fallen from the lips to which he looked for love and life and every thing—to every expression which had wreathed in smiles, or clouded with disapprobation the soul-

fraught lineaments of Sibyl, he could not bless himself with the conviction, scarce even with the hope, that she was not, although in a less stern degree, the holder of the same ancestral prejudices—a worshipper of the same creed, hallowed as it was by much that naturally would call forth the sympathies of a mind imbued with all the poetry of feudal recollections, not as yet faded from the earth—by the high chivalrous devotion—the noble and unselfish confidence—the enthusiastic valour—the unsullied memory and cloudless glory of the days when kings were loved as second only to the gods—when loyalty was regarded as a virtue among men, in the same rank with piety toward Heaven.

Whither, then—whither had fallen his exulting fancies—whither had flown his visionary prospects of a useful and a happy life, of an honoured and regretted end—if the paths of happiness and honour were destined to run diverse? If,

his heart burning with the pure and hallowed flame of liberty, his head clearly appreciating the miserable and abhorred aims of the rash man who wore the crown of England, his whole soul glowing with patriotic ardour, he must either prostitute his energies to make what to him seemed the worse appear the better cause—must either lift his voice to justify and to defend time-honoured wrong and new-devised oppression—must either edge the weapon of the despot with all the powers of his arm—or, following the dictates of his own conscience, ranking himself among the vindicators of the constitution to its early purity, among the assertors of a legitimate and tempered freedom—as far removed from the wild anarchy and licence of falsely-styled republics, as from the forced obedience and intolerant rule of arbitrary governors—must be content to sacrifice all that his heart held worthy its acceptance? If, in short,

he must act a part dishonest and unworthy, so to gain those ordinary means of happiness, to which none so lowly but they do aspire ; or must surrender every hope, nay every possibility of earthly bliss at the inflexible commands of duty and honour.

These were the dark reflections into which the mind of Ardenne had relapsed, as he stood alone, gazing from the lattice of his chamber into the bosom of the night, profiting by, if not enjoying, the first moments of calm solitude, the first opportunity for quiet and heart-searching meditation, that had fallen to his lot, since he had been numbered once again among the dwellers beneath the oaken shades of his paternal Woodleigh ; nor, as the hours of night passed, not unheralded by musical chimes from the old belfry, and the moonlight waned in the peaceful sky, did his wild thoughts and sad forebodings give way to aught of weariness ;

the more he pondered, the less able did he seem to find the slightest clue to guide his footsteps through the gloomy labyrinth of the future—the longer he sat gazing on the pallid stars, the less he felt disposed for slumber; till at length, the spirit moving as it were too rapidly, and the blood coursing through his veins too fiercely to permit the body to remain inactive, he arose, scarce conscious that he did so, and paced the oaken floor backward and forward, with swift irregular steps, the livelong night.

Gradually the coming of the early twilight dappled the darkness of the eastern sky; a bird or two, of those which had securely roosted under the ivy-curtained eaves, awaking with a lively chirp, gave notice of the dawn; and anon the calm and colourless light of an autumnal morning crept into Ardenne's chamber, dispelling from its every nook, the massy

shadows which had nestled, like unholy spirits, in those deep recesses beneath the partial influence of the moon. But all unnoted by its occupant had those successive changes circled the firmament; and when the sound of voices and of footsteps, passing to and fro the corridors, announced the return of those bright hours allotted to so much of human toil and sorrow, he absolutely started in surprise, and almost doubted whether it could indeed be morning that had stolen on his waking dreams and found him still a watcher.

With something like a smile at his own thoughtful carelessness, he turned to change and alter his disarranged attire; and as he dashed the pure cold water over his throbbing temples, and bathed his feverish hands, he perceived that its refreshing coolness pervaded not his body only, but calmed and soothed his mind; and when the merry bell summoned its

hearers to that most unrestrained and sociable of meetings, the morning meal, he descended the old staircase—gazing upon its walls decked with time-honoured banners and glittering with starry groups of weapons, and its landing-places guarded by complete panoplies of steel standing erect with advanced arms and lowered visors, as if still tenanted by the strong frames that had supported them of yore amid the din of battle—if not with a heart at ease, at least with a countenance that bore no traces of the conflict still at work within.

On entering the summer-parlour, as such rooms were termed in the quaint language of the time, wherein meet preparations for a breakfast far more solid than are used in these degenerate days had been already made, he found his destined bride alone in a projecting oriel window, seated on the broad-cushioned ottoman which circled the recess, with a light

frame before her, filled with a gorgeous Indian silk, on which her art had traced some fair embroideries yet incomplete; but though the many-coloured skeins assorted within reach, and the well-filled needle between her taper fingers showed that she had commenced her feminine and graceful occupation, the thoughtful attitude of her head languidly propped on her left hand, while the right lay motionless on the rich texture, belied her fancied industry.

So noiselessly had Edgar's step fallen on the soft Turkey carpet, that Sibyl had not perceived his entrance; and so beautiful was the picture of still life which she afforded to her lover's gaze, that he lingered for a moment ere his voice should rouse her into animation. A flood of morning lustre streamed downward with a golden hue, caught from the tinted panes, upon her glossy hair and pure complexion, circling her entire form with a halo of rich light, no

unlike that with which the painters of the Romish school are wont to hallow their female saints and martyrs. The outlines of her beautiful shape were mellowed, as it were, and shrouded partially by the hazy beams of sunshine which fell in oblique lines between the observer's eye and her person, simply arrayed in a close bodice, accurately fitted to her fine bust, and a full robe of white. Her luxuriant tresses folded plainly about the contour of her small and classic head, without ornament or gem of any kind; and the exceeding repose, if it might not be termed melancholy, of her features, giving, together with the accidents of light and shade, a Madonna-like and sainted aspect to her figure, which would have enchained an artist with no less of fascination than it exercised, from different reasons, over the mind of Ardenne.

As he approached, her delicate ear detected

him; she turned her head, and springing to her feet, "Dear Edgar!" she exclaimed, her eye discovering with instinctive quickness the trace of melancholy left upon his lineaments, however faintly, by his nightly musings, "you are ill at ease.—Nay, smile not—'tis a ghastly smile, not of your own expression!—you are ill at ease,—have you passed a sleepless night?"

"Sweet Sibyl," he replied, with a wan smile, and gently pressing her extended hand, "you are indeed a keen observer; too keen, believe me! How should I be, but well and happy, surrounded thus by all I love most tenderly?"

"How, indeed—Edgar!" she answered, even more sadly than before. "How, indeed—if you *do* love so tenderly? But ill at ease you are, and have been sleepless! All night long have I heard your heavy strides upon the chamber-floor, and those not regular and measured as your wont, but fitful and uncer-

tain. The happy do not so pass their first night beneath the roof that saw their birth."

"*If* I do love, Sibyl,—*if!*"—he exclaimed, with deep almost reproachful energy—"But, in good truth, I am a poor dissembler, and could scarcely feign, were it to win even thy heart, Sibyl—and, for it seems I must confess me, I am somewhat, though slightly, ill at ease—"

"I knew—I knew it, at a glance," she interrupted him; "and wherefore then conceal it? Good Doctor Masters, though somewhat past his prime, still ministers, and skilfully, to his familiar patients—an hour will have him here"—and she moved hastily toward a silver hand-bell, which stood, with books and drawings and a lady's lute, upon a fairy-looking cabinet of tortoiseshell and marquetry.

"Nay! nay!" he cried, gently arresting her,—“I meant not so! Be not alarmed,

dear Sibyl, mine is a robust frame, not oft or easily affected by aught of feebleness or ailment. My mind hath been of late somewhat o'erwrought—but a few days consumed in the enjoyment of home, happiness, and the delights of your society, shall speedily restore me. Look not so grave—so sad—I do beseech you—”

“Oh, Edgar,” she interrupted him again, “tell me, if you do love me, tell me all! Long years have we been parted—parted, as I have hoped—as, from your kind and fervent letters, I have well believed—in body, not in soul! and is it now—oh! is it to be thus? Are we to be but more divided, when we are more together? Have we but met to be more widely and more coldly severed? Oh! if you love me, let me know your griefs! Who, before me, should know—or who, as I, would share them?”

“All—all,” he answered, in the hollow voice of one who struggles vainly with his feelings, forcing a smile as faint as a December’s sunbeam. “You shall share all—grief—happiness—life—death—eternity ! All, all, sweet Sibyl, if that indeed you be so minded ! From you I have had—I will have, no secrets ;—but now, I do assure you, I am not in grief,—how should I ? Something of gloomy thought may have come over me—something of moody sadness—causeless and senseless—such as will float at times across the brains of all, who think—as I do deeply. But no, Sibyl, no, I am not unhappy ! Not for the proudest station upon earth would I exchange this fond proximity to thee—not for the universal blast of the world’s approbation would I barter that bright tear—shed for me, Sibyl—or that yet brighter tear, that chases it. Cheer up, my own, own, love, we will

talk more of this anon—for lo! here comes my father!”

And as he spoke, attired in hunter’s garb of green, booted to the mid-thigh, with bugle-horn and wood-knife usurping the place of rapier and of poniard, and with two gallant stag-hounds at his heel, the noble veteran entered.

“Alert—alert!” he cried, with a gay smile—“you of young blood! Methought I was myself full early stirring, but here are ye, in rising as in all else, beforehand with me. What ho! ye loitering knaves, hurry our breakfast! ’Tis a rare morning, Edgar—a soft mild wind, a heavy dew last eventide, and the clouds gently rising. Old Stavely tells me he has harboured a right hart of grease—a stag of ten!—and I have sent out riders these four hours agone, to rouse the country. The Outrams will be here anon—you mind the

Outrams, boy, your college mates of yore, and now right noble gallants; and Atherstone, of Ashstead Hall, and old Lord Middleton, with his brave sons! Friends all—true friends, though some of them, I doubt, forgotten! But 'fore George we will make a day of it!"

Thus the old man ran on, overlooking in his light-hearted cheerfulness the evident abstraction of his listeners, although they rallied up enough of animation to maintain some sort of conversation during their hasty meal, which scarce was ended ere Sir Henry started from his seat.

"See! see!" he cried, as a fair cavalcade swept past the windows, their plumes waving in the light west wind, spurs jingling, and steeds curvetting. "See! they be here even now; and lo! the pack!" As, with their attendant huntsmen, and half a score of prickers, splendidly mounted on blood-horses, and

attired in forest jerkins sumptuously laced, round caps, and huge French-horns encircling their shoulders, restrained by many an echoing shout, and many a clanging lash, some twenty couple of tall northern bloodhounds came trotting slowly up the lawn, in all that perfect condition and accuracy of detail, which has, in every period of her history, been so distinctive of the field-sports of England!

“Fly, Sibyl—fly, my fairy,” cried the impatient veteran. “Do on your riding-gear right speedily—Ariel is champing on his bits even now, to summon you! Edgar and I meanwhile will look to our guests in the great hall. Dally not, girl, I pray you—the sun is shrouded even now, and the scent will lie most bravely—I would not, to be Prince of Wales, lose such a morning! What ho! my jovial roisters,” he continued, in a louder tone, striding into the huge vaulted hall through

one door, as his fair niece vanished at the other. "What ho!" addressing the laughing group, who waited his arrival. "Here have ye an old friend, whom some of ye perchance have not as yet forgotten."

And with a prouder air, and more exulting smile, he introduced his gallant son, unseen for many a year, to his admiring friends.

A short half-hour flitted pleasantly away in heartfelt greetings, and gay converse, of light moment, but lively, joyous, and sincere. Then every high-plumed hat was doffed, and every voice was lowered, as Sibyl Ardenne, with her attendant maidens, meetly equipped for the field, entered the hall.

"To horse! to horse!" was now the word; and the ladies were assisted to their velvet selles by favoured cavaliers, and the gallants vaulted to their saddles, and threw their chargers on their haunches by dint of curb and spur, and

drew their forms to the most graceful attitude, as with courtly merriment and sylvan music, they swept away through shadowy avenues and over shaven lawns, to the wilder coppices and more secluded glades of chase and forest.

CHAPTER V.

The chase is o'er—go couple up the pack,
And let your lusty horn ring holyday
To the swinked foresters—we'll hunt no more,
Since duty calls of gravest import stern,
And deep election—of high causes twain
Which is the better!

THE hunt was at its height! The noble stag—
which had been harboured, on the previous night,
in a deep swampy thicket, situate at the extreme
western verge of the chase, and adjoining a wild
tract of semi-cultivated moorland—disdaining
to seek refuge in the recesses of the devious

woodland, had broken covert gallantly, as the first crash of deep-mouthed music burst from his stanch pursuers, and clearing by a gigantic effort the rough park-palings had taken to the open country, crossing hill and dale in a line scarce less direct than the crow's flight, and at a pace that, ere an hour had passed, reduced the number of those who followed the now mute and panting hounds from a score or two of fearless horsemen to scarcely half a dozen of the boldest and best-mounted riders.

The ladies of the party had long since been thrown out, scarcely indeed having cantered a half-mile along the nearest road, after the hounds had left the confines of the park; but still the foremost of the field, with all the hair-brained courage of a boy, and all the deep sagacious foresight of a veteran sportsman, rode old Sir Henry Ardenne; his manly features flushed with the excitement of his healthful exercise,

and his gray hair floating on the current of air created by his own swift motion, as cap in hand he cheered the laggards of the pack with a voice that had lost nothing of its full-toned roundness.

At length, in a sequestered dell clothed on each hand with a dense growth of underwood feathering its rocky and precipitous declivities, down which a sandy road wound in short toilsome curves, and watered by a bright and brawling rivulet, hard-pressed and weary the brave quarry turned to bay. The deep note of the leading hound changed to a shrill and savage treble as he viewed his prey, and at the same instant the loud death-halloo rang from the exulting lips of the old baronet, as he caught and comprehended the import of that sharp yell.

Another minute brought him to the brink of a wide pool, embayed between rough cliffs of

sandstone, and overlooked by a gnarled and leafless oak, on the highest branch of which a solitary raven sat unmoved by the fierce clamour, and expecting with a sullen croak its share of the after-carnage. In the farther corner of this basin, clear as the virgin crystal in its ordinary state, but turbid now and lashed to foam by the conflict of the animals, the stag had turned on his pursuers—nor had he turned in vain! for one, a brindled bloodhound, the boldest of the pack, unseamed from shoulder-blade to brisket by a thrust of the terrible brow-antler, lay underneath his stamping hoofs a lifeless carcass; while others bayed at a distance, reluctant, as it seemed, again to rush upon an enemy who had already left such painful evidences of his strength and valour on their gored and trampled limbs.

Nor, though his velvet coat was clogged and blackened with the dust and sweat, and though

the big tears—tokens of anguish in its expression wellnigh human—rolled down his hairy cheeks, did the noble animal exhibit ought of craven terror at the approach of his inveterate pursuers ; but, as the veteran advanced upon him, with the glittering wood-knife bared and ready, leaving the dogs as if beneath his notice, he dashed with a bold spring against his human persecutor, eye, hoof, and horn, in perfect concert of quick movement.

The slightest tremor in the huntsman's nerves, the most trifling slip or stumble, might have well proved fatal ; but, although seventy winters had shed their snows upon his head, his muscles had been indurated so by constant exercise in his beloved field-sports, that many a younger arm had failed in rivalling their powerful though unelastic firmness. When the despairing deer made his last effort, eluding by a rapid turn his

formidable front, Sir Henry struck a full blow as he passed, completely severing the tendons of the hinder leg. Hamstrung and crippled, the gallant brute plunged headlong forward, and received in the next instant the keen point in his gullet.

One short gurgling bleat, and two or three convulsive struggles of the agile limbs, the full eye glazed, and in a moment all the fiery energy, the bounding life that had so lately animated that beautiful form, was utterly extinct for ever.

Then came the thundering shouts, and the long cadences of the French-horns, their joyous notes multiplied by the ringing echoes, and sent back from every heath-clad knoll or craggy eminence,—the merry narrative of harmless accidents,—the self-congratulations of the select and lucky few, who from the start to the death had kept the hounds in view,—the queries for

the absent,—the praises of some favourite horse, or daring rider,—the stingless raillery,—the honest unfeigned laughter!

“Who hath seen Ardenne? What chance hath hindered Edgar?” suddenly inquired one of the younger of the party.

“Edgar not here!” exclaimed his father, for the first time discovering his absence. “Edgar not here! ’Fore George! but he must bide the jest for this!”

“’Tis strange, Sir Henry—passing strange, though!” interposed an old gray-headed forester. “None here can match the master’s horsemanship; and that brown mare hath the pace in her and the bottom too. Pray Heaven he be not hurt!”

“I fear he may—I fear he may be hurt,” exclaimed another. “He was beside me just before we crossed the northern road. I marked him charge the Hartley bourn right gallantly, and

noticed the mare's stride—nigh thirty feet, I warrant it.”

In a moment or two the wonder had increased until it might be called anxiety—excitement—the more so, as at intervals the laggards of the chase came straggling in, with mud-stained garb and jaded horses; yet none brought tidings of the absent cavalier.

At length, sounding their horns from time to time, they turned their horses' heads toward home, asking for tidings of their missing comrade, from every traveller or peasant they encountered. Nought did they learn, however, till they had neared the park, when an unlucky groom leading his lame and weary hunter by the rein, informed them that the young master had been accosted as he crossed the great north road by a passing stranger, a marvellously sour-looking knave, the servant said, with a cropped pate; that he had curbed his horse to listen to

him, and on the receiving of some packet or despatches, he knew not which, had ridden slowly homeward in deep converse with the bearer.

“St. George! and with a puritan!” cried one of the young Outrams, a harebrained, light-hearted cavalier—“A rascally, starved, round-head!”

“He must be strangely altered then, I trow,” muttered the aged huntsman—who, perhaps, had taught him when a boy to ride so well—“an he be gone home with a musty beggar; the hounds running breast-high, too, over the vale of Bardsey!

“Tush! tell me not; he is too true an Ardenne,” cried his father almost angrily, “that he should e’er consort with base and brutal fanatics—Heaven’s curse upon them!”

The report of the fallen rider was nevertheless true in its most minute particular of circum-

stance ; for, as he leaped the fence into the road, and pulled upon his rein, to spare his horse's feet on the rough pavement, a strange-looking man—gaunt, grim, and tall, with an affected air of sanctified austerity on his pinched features, wearing his coarse and foxy hair shorn close to the skin, and clipped into small peaks alike unseemly and ridiculous, with a tall steeple-crowned hat, and a sad-coloured doublet, threadbare and travel-worn, presenting altogether an appearance as dissimilar as possible to that of a gentleman—called to him in a pert shrill voice,

“ Canst tell the distance hence to Woodleigh, the residence of Ardenne—him men call Sir Henry; cumbering their tongues with vain distinctions, titles alike unsavoury and profitless?”

“ A brief three miles,” frankly returned the cavalier. “ But you may spare yourself even that short distance, an you list! There rides Sir Henry, he on the chestnut horse! I will

o'ertake and stop him, an your business may not tarry !”

“ Nay, friend,” returned the other ; “ my call is not with the old, vain-minded, carnal, cavalier ; but with his son—a godly youth, men say—honest, and sanctified ! yea, one of the elect.”

“ A truce to thine impertinence, sir knave !” Edgar replied, in a quick angry tone,—“ a truce to thine impertinence, an thou wouldst not receive its wages ; nor deem thy fulsome flattery toward myself shall anywise excuse thy ribald scoffing at my father ! Begone, sir—tempt me, an you be wise, no further !”

He had already touched his mare with the spur, in order to regain his place beside the hounds, which had gained on him some two fields' width during the interruption, when the puritan reined his hackney short across his path, crying out in a voice somewhat dimi-

nished of its self-importance, "Nay! no offence; for if thou be'est the man, 'twere worth thy while to tarry—I am the bearer of a letter! yea! of two letters, for the good youth, Edgar Ardenne—I pray thee to relieve me of the charge."

"Begone, sir! To your duty!" again vociferated Ardenne, in a tone yet sterner than he had used before. "Begone to Woodleigh, and await my leisure. When I return, 'twill be, I warrant me right soon enough to look to these despatches. I know not who should write to me, by such a low and scurvy comrade, that I should lose my sport to minister to his convenience!"

"Well! be it as thou wilt," muttered the puritan; "but an John Milton's—worshipful John Milton's letter meet with no better treatment, I had as well wend back again to Huntingdon!"

“Milton! ha!” answered Ardenne, who had already moved to some considerable distance before he caught the name,—“Milton! why said'st not so before—perverse and insolent? Dally with me no further, thou wert best but give at once thy missives, and follow me direct to Woodleigh!”

Ere he had finished speaking, he received the packets—the one a large and cumbrous parcel, wrapped in a skin of thick discoloured parchment, and fastened by a triple band of flaxen thread with a huge seal stamped with armorial bearings charged on a broad municipal escutcheon—the other a small neatly folded letter of smooth white vellum, secured by a skein of delicate sleeve-silk and drop of wax impressed with a superb antique—the stern and rigid features of the elder Cato.

The former of these packets was addressed, with cramped mercantile penmanship, to “Ed-

gar—son of the worshipful Sir Henry Ardenne, knight banneret, and baronet, of Woodleigh, nigh to Stamford, in the good Shire of Rutland; with haste and diligence—post haste !” The latter was directed in a beautiful but bold and manly hand, “To the noble youth Edgar Ardenne.” This was the first he opened, and a pleasing smile played over his fine features as he perused the well-turned periods of his already celebrated friend.

“I much rejoice to hear,” thus did the letter run, “most excellent and esteemed sir, that you have now accomplished, with no hurt or detriment, your long-looked-for return to England; and, what redounds so vastly to your credit, that you have come weaning your thirsty soul from those delicious draughts of pure Parnassian waters, in which you have so bathed of late your fancy; and casting aside your delectation in those Italian cities wherein

you have so profited by cultivating high pursuits of literature, and conversations of the learned—to turn the complete *vis* and vigour of your intellect toward the miserable strait in which our native land lies struggling—

Ut clausus Gyaræ scopulis parvâque Scripho—

A strait so fearful, that she wellnigh has lost not only the fruition present and temporal of her liberties, both civil and religious, but the very hope of their redemption. And yet most earnestly do I rejoice, that you are called so suddenly, and with so honourable circumstance, to take your place in that high council of the nation, for which your genius and your talents so excellently do befit you. I would not wish you in so much to ponder on the character and principles of them that have united in this tribute to your worth, if they

should be in aught—although good patriots and true—distasteful to your feelings, as on the mighty services you well may be an instrument to render, and on the duty paramount which should enforce you so to render them, in that most glorious and free assemblage on which hangs every hope of England. But with respect to this, without attending my injunctions, you have an admirable monitor, a very entire and pure guide, in your own sense of right, which to obey is to be virtuous and wise, and in obeying which you shall at once fulfil the wishes of your oppressed and lamentable country, and give the highest pleasure to your wellwisher, and friend constantly,

“JOHN MILTON.

“From my villa, Aldersgate, Oct. 12, 1641.”

The calm deliberation with which the cava-

lier had opened, and applied himself to read the familiar letter of his trusty fellow-traveller, gave way, long ere he had concluded, to manifest and restless eagerness; and if he read it through, before he tore asunder the fastenings of the larger packet, it was rather that he hoped within itself to find a clue whereby to solve its mystery, than that he was indifferent to learn what was the nature of the call, to which his friend alluded. But, when he closed it, still in ignorance of that which it behoved him most to know, his colour went and came, and his heart beat quick, as he turned hastily to the sole remaining source of information.

The paper that first caught Edgar's eye, on opening the packet, was a fair document in large clear characters, engrossed on vellum, and purporting to be an invitation from the freeholders of the good town of Huntingdon to Edgar Ardenne, that he would present him-

self a candidate to fill the seat, as member for their borough, in the most worshipful the Commons House of Parliament, lately made vacant by the untimely death of their regretted and right trusty delegate, Elias Chaloner. The second was a brief explanatory statement, signed by the mayor and several of the leading burghers of the town, assuring him that all he had to do in order to secure election, was to make known to them his willingness to serve in parliament, as no other candidate was in the field, nor, if there were, could any have the smallest chance of coping with success against a nominee so universally admired and approved by every class of voters. No pledge was asked—no line of conduct indicated, to which it was expected that he should adhere—no query hinted at concerning his attachment to either of the parties, between which the whole of England was at that time divided. They were

sufficiently assured, the letter stated, of the integrity, the wisdom, and the constancy of him on whom their choice had fallen—so well assured, that they were perfectly content, without condition specified or question asked, to place their interests, their hopes, their fortunes, and, if need were, their lives, at his disposal.

In mute astonishment, Edgar read successively these several documents; and still, the more he read, the more his wonder and his doubts increased. That he, who had been absent from the land of his fathers almost from the day on which he first wrote man—that he, unstamped by any public act or private declaration—uncommitted to any party or opinion—nay, undecided, for aught that the world knew, in his own mind, as to which cause he should espouse in the approaching contest, foreseen by him, as by all men endowed with ordinary

prescience of events,—that he should be thus summoned, within two weeks of his arrival in his native country, and that without a pledge, to fill a place the most conspicuous to which a private individual can well aspire,—that he should be thus eminently trusted, and by men whose very names were strangers to his ears; whose town he had never even entered, save as a passing traveller; whose principles, but from the somewhat formal and affected plainness of their style, together with the unseemly garments and austere demeanour of their messenger, he had no means of so much as conjecturing; and who, so far as he could comprehend, must be still more at a loss to judge of the parts or principles of him to whom they had so confidently offered the representation of their interests, the proxy of their united voices;—all this was indeed sufficiently embarrassing, nay, unaccountable at any time;

and the more so at a period when political intrigue and treachery were rife, beyond all precedent, among the men reputed as the leaders in the councils of the nation.

That such a call was flattering, and that in a degree not trivial or accustomed, could not be doubted or denied; but while he felt that sweetest, most ennobling of sensations, the conviction that his character was understood, and his worth appreciated by his fellow-citizens, mingled with a high consciousness that his eloquence, his learning, and experience, might indeed minister not smally to the welfare of his country, Ardenne was yet perplexed, anxious, and doubtful.

Nor did it seem that he was destined easily, or by any effort of his own, to extricate himself from this uncertainty; for when, after musing long and vainly on the import of the letters, he turned for information to the messenger, that

worthy, doubtless resenting with all the rancour of a petty mind the merited rebuke of Edgar, wrapped himself up in such a veil of real or pretended dulness, as defied every species of cross-examination applied to wring from his fanatic obstinacy the reluctant truth. "He had been sent," he said, "a hired messenger to carry certain missives, not to expound enigmas, nor to illuminate the darkness of those whom, it might be, Jehovah had for their sins involved in the dark night of ignorance. He knew not aught of the matter; nor, if he had known, should he have deemed it fitting to reveal that which those worthy persons, his employers, had found it meet to leave uncertain.

The burgh of Huntingdon, he answered, when Edgar varied the subject and the manner of his investigation, was a true town, and godly. Its late member, good Elias Chaloner, a man learned beyond his fellows, not in the vain and

carnal lore of the idolatrous and God-defying heathen, but in the pure and sanctifying wisdom of the gospel. Of its politics he knew not any thing, nor cared. Some cavaliers there were—debosht rakehelly profligates—such as the Knight of Hinchinbrook, uncle of worthy Master Cromwell, now sitting in the Commons' House, for the right saintly town of Cambridge,—and others, not a few. But of a truth the citizens, craftsmen, and artisans, ay, and the mayor and council, were pious and God-fearing men, seeking the Lord alway, day and night, in prayer and meditation. For the rest, if it were so that they had summoned Master Ardenne to be their deputy in parliament, verily theirs was the power to do so; ay, and they knew right well the wherefore! They were not men, he trowed, to leap i' the dark and to repent at leisure. If Master Ardenne thought it good to suit himself to this promotion, his, as

was very fitting, would be the honour and advancement: if not, the men of Huntingdon would be at little trouble to elect as good, if not an abler statesman, to represent their voices.

In this unsatisfied and dubious state of mind, Edgar, with his uncourtly comrade, arrived at the park-gates, and quickening his pace, rode hastily along the noble avenue of elms to the main entrance, flung his rein to a groom, and consigning his companion to the attentions of the gray-headed steward, passed with a hurried and irregular step to his own chamber; there, in undisturbed and silent solitude, to ponder on his singular position.

Hours fled by, as with his head propped on his hands, and his eyes fixed on the characters of which his mind, however, took no note, he racked his brain with almost hopeless efforts to conjecture who might be the secret movers in this matter. That his friend Milton had

ever been an ardent votary of liberty, in its most liberal and extended sense,—a dreamer of those bright Utopian visions concerning perfect commonwealths and absolute equality of men, which, in whatever age or country, never have been, never can be, realized—a modeller of constitutions, excellent in contemplation, but untested by experience; or, if tested by the self-styled republics, but real aristocracies, of early Rome, or earlier Greece, proved only to be fickle, changeful, and unstable, Ardenne well knew, and often with delighted ears had listened, and with mind that yielded to the enthralling grandeur of those theoretic dreamings, while it perceived their fallacy, to the deep-souled and burning eloquence with which he loved to advocate his wild but splendid projects. He had, moreover, heard that subsequently to his return from Italy, the sage enthusiast had devoted himself with stern and

self-denying application, to the maintenance of the most rigid puritanic forms of protestant morality and doctrines against the laxer customs of the church of England, at that time assimilating itself daily more and more, through the bigoted obstinacy of its reckless monarch, and of that most dangerous of all his counsellors, the haughty and half-papish Laud, to the detested ritual and creed of Rome.

Nor could Edgar doubt, well as he was informed of the almost inseparable league between puritanism in religion and the love of freedom in the state, that the already celebrated author of the "Reformation in England," and "the Reason of Church-government," was no less strongly interested in opposition to that extension of prerogative already stretched to the very verge of absolute and irresponsible autocracy, than his illustrious admirers and associates, Hampden and Pym. Still he could not

easily give credence to the fancy that Milton only—for to him alone, of all those patriots with whom his spirit sympathized so warmly in their devoted struggles in behalf of England's constitution, was he personally or intimately known—should have possessed the power to procure him that untrammelled offer of a seat, which individuals of far greater eminence might have been proud to occupy.

Amid these painful meditations, too, there ran a mingled strain of deeper, because more personal, disquietude—an agonizing apprehension, amounting almost to a certainty, that a seat in parliament, entailing on him as it necessarily must, the highest of all moral obligations—binding him, with fetters stronger a hundred-fold than the poetic adamant, to the upholding of that cause which his mature unbiassed judgment should deem right—must

set him on the instant in direct unnatural opposition to his father, and, yet worse, must sever him from her whose love he surely prized above all mortal blessings.

It was in vain that he attempted to shake off the leaden weight of this dark apprehension—it was to no purpose, that hope whispered to his bosom, how all might yet be well—it was to no purpose that he strove to reconcile the diverse paths of duty and of pleasure. A dozen times he took his pen in hand, to write an answer to the perplexing invitation, and as often threw it from him in utter inability to frame a single sentence. Once, at suggestion of his warmer passions, and yielding to the persuasion of that single grain of selfishness, which must still lurk in every bosom, even of the best and purest, his fingers traced three lines of absolute denial; but ere the clause was finished the

juster sense returned, and the torn sheet was in an instant shrivelling amid the logs that cracked on the hearthstone.

“No, no!” he cried aloud, in the low husky tones, which tell so fearfully of inward agony,—“no, no—my country,—never will I betray thee at thine utmost need!—What though my heart be broken in the strife—what though I lose all things that make this earth a paradise and not a hell—what though I perish—or, yet worse, live homeless, friendless, fatherless, deserted—hated by whom I most adore, and cursed by whom I bless—that though *I, I*—one man and for one little life, must bear all anguish that a life can compass,—shall I for this shrink back, knowing that England needs the voice, the hand, the soul, of every son she has, to save her from destruction, to redeem her living millions—her millions yet unborn—from countless

centuries of servitude and sorrow!—The cup—the cup is filled!—God grant me strength to drain it—ay to the very dregs!”

And with a calm unfaltering hand he drew a brief but full acceptance of the trust so proffered to his choice; pledging himself to act, so long as he should represent their voices, so, and so only, as his own heart should dictate. “I would,” he wrote, “before investing myself with the great and onerous responsibility you wish to impose upon me,—I would that you clearly know and apprehend my principles, and rule of action. All party I disclaim—all preconceived opinion from my soul I disavow! To hold the freedom of our land inviolate, of our religion pure, I esteem the first of duties. But the freedom which I look to—I pray you mark me now, so shall there be no blame hereafter—is the freedom of our British constitution, not the licentious anarchy of democratic)

innovation; and the religion which I will maintain is the religion of my fathers—the reformed church of England, equally aloof from the debasing superstitions of the Romish creed, and from the stern fanaticism of Lutheran or Calvinistic sectaries. If then, on knowing these my tenets, both of church and state, ye make it your election still to go forward in this matter, I shall so labour, with such powers both of mind and body as God in his good wisdom hath assigned me, as I may deem the fittest to secure unto ourselves, and unto our posterity for ever, the blessings of a government at once liberal and firm—of a religion, pure no less than tolerant and free. If, on the other hand, ye doubt in aught my motives, or disapprove my principles as stated heretofore—if ye do look that I should yield at any time, or under any circumstance, my own conviction to the opinion or the prejudice

of others—even of yourselves, my own constituents—then make at once a fresh selection of a man more suited to your purposes ; accepting in meanwhile my high consideration of the honour ye have done me in thus summoning me, as yet a stranger, to the highest] station of your trust.”

Scarcely had he concluded his epistle ere a quick heavy footstep, sounding through the corridor, approached his chamber-door, and paused beside it, followed by a short firm tap upon the oaken panel.—“ Now comes the crisis of my fate !” inwardly muttered Ardenne, as recognising on the instant the footstep of his father he hurried to admit him.

“ So studious, Edgar ?” cried the veteran. “ Plunged to your very neck in parchments !—The matter must, I trow, be all important, that should have won you homeward from such music as was ringing in your ears, when you

this morning left us in the vale of Bardsey! 'Fore George, but he ran gallantly and straight, poor dapple!—turned him to bay in the witch hollow beneath Leader-hill—gored brindled Mortimer to the death, ere I came up with him, and hurt some six or eight of the others. What in the fiend's name called you home?—What clouds your face, even now, so darkly?—Speak, Edgar: hast ill tidings?"

“Not ill, sir, not ill tidings—but of weighty import,” answered Ardenne, as his father threw himself upon a massive settle in the chimney-corner—“and such as have urged on me much grave thought ere I might answer them!” and, as he spoke, he tendered to his hand the invitation from the burgh of Huntingdon. “Here, if my visage be o’ercast, here shall you find the cause—and this, when you shall have perused the first, contains my answer.”

With deep anxiety did the eye of Edgar

dwell upon the keen intelligent features of the aged man, fitfully lighted up by the uncertain gleams from the piled hearth—for evening had crept on them unperceived, and the sky was growing dark apace—as he read the letters by the firelight. Changes there were indeed upon the broad unwrinkled forehead, chasing each other over it in quick succession—now a deep frown corded the muscles of the brow, but more perhaps from the effects of thought, than from disgust or anger—anon it was relaxed, and a more bland expression played around the mouth, and the full open eye shone cheerfully. But again the glance was clouded, and the lip curled in scorn till every hair of his mustache worked, as it were instinct with life.

“The roundhead scurvy villains!” he exclaimed at length, striking the extended parchment forcibly with the forefinger of his right hand—“The base mechanical burghers!—I

marvel they should dare pollute a gentleman's ear with their accursed puritanic cant. You have refused them, Edgar—indignantly hurled back their most insulting proffer in their teeth! Is it not so?—Now, on your life, say ay!”

“I see it not in this light, sir,” Edgar replied respectfully but firmly,—“I see it not at all in this light—nor is there aught, to my poor comprehension, either of cant or insult in this invitation.”

“Doubtless you have accepted it—this flattering invitation!” interrupted the old man, with an expression of the most bitter irony—“doubtless you have!”

“I *have* accepted it,” calmly returned his son—“I have, indeed, accepted it; nor can I possibly conceive—”

“You have *not*, Edgar Ardenne,” his father almost shouted, as he sprang to his feet, spurning the footstool from beneath them to the far-

ther corner of the room—"you have not *dared* to do so! You! you! an Ardenne—heir to some twenty generations of high-minded, noble, loyal cavaliers—you blend yourself with the foul puddle blood of craftsmen, and pinched beggarly mechanics!—you band yourself with hypocrites and traitors against your church, your country, and your king!—No, no!—it can *not* be!"

"Indeed! indeed! it could not," replied Edgar, in tones almost femininely soothing—"indeed it could not be that I should ever mix myself with aught degenerate or base, much less with aught unprincipled or traitorous. But of a truth, my father, I apprehend not any thing—though straining to the utmost of my understanding—I apprehend not any thing here written to imply aught that can by any means be tortured into treason or fanaticism. Nay, for my part, I find not aught that would restrain me, if

I should be so minded, from degrading loyalty, even as the member for this very borough, into most prostrate oriental slavishness—from bartering our reformed religion for Romish superstition! A seat is proffered to me freely—without condition, pledge, or hint of any interference. Nay! the constituents aver that they refer themselves in all things to my judgment—submit themselves to absolute dictation of my individual will. Now, sir, it seems to me—I pray you so far pardon me, as to permit me to speak to the end—it seems to me, if—as I see no cause to deem them such—these men of Huntingdon be fanatics and traitors, there cannot be a better mode of frustrating their ill intentions, than that I, who most assuredly am neither, should accept their offer, and represent their bigoted and treasonable voices by a most tolerant and patriotic vote !”

Sir Henry’s passions had displayed their pro-

gress on his features, during his son's rejoinder, even more strongly, and with more definite changes than before. At the first every line and feature was inflamed almost to bursting with fierce and fiery indignation—varying as Edgar proceeded to that air of obstinate unwilling coolness with which a man resigns himself to some infliction which he may not avoid. Then, as the truth of what was said impressed itself by slow degrees upon his senses, he listened with attention approaching somewhat to respect, till, when the last sentence fell upon his ear and he fancied that the full policy of his son was there disclosed to him, his mighty satisfaction flashed from his whole face, as he exclaimed—

“Excellent!—I was dull indeed!—Excellent! Edgar—and so ‘hoist the knave engineers, e’en with their own petard!’—’Fore George, but you surpass, not your old father’s talents only—that you did ever—but his utmost wishes! And so,

when the fool puritans would have you rob the church and manacle the king, vote like a loyal cavalier—now out on me for an old superannuated dolt, that would not hear or comprehend !”

“Nay, sir; but even now,” said Edgar, not a little astonished by this ebullition of mistaken pleasure,—“even now you do misapprehend me somewhat. I have accepted this same seat in the Commons, giving the men of Huntingdon to know that I will hold myself responsible to no authority save that of my own conscience. Party, or place, I hold not to, nor covet. In all high honour, and in all accordance with my own sense of just and right, will I vote ever! If these men should dare propose to me, or hint, that I should swerve one hairbreadth from the course of truth and honour, then would I surely disobey them, spit at them, and spurn them. But, if they shall prove honest, as surely will I

compromise no tittle of their interests or their opinions; and so far am I from suspecting aught of this, that I do well believe that my constituents shall prove right honest men and true; else, under favour be it spoken, I deem it most unlikely they should have fixed their choice on me—a man, perhaps not altogether void of some repute and honour; and, if unknown myself, at least a scion of a family that has not ever stooped to fraud or to dishonour!”

“Enough said, Edgar! Enough said! I was a fool to doubt thee.” And the old man grasped his hand with warm affection, as he answered, while a tear slid down his withered cheek, “I was a fool to doubt thee; for thou wert ever true and noble, as I was ever over choleric and rash. Some things, too, in good sooth, there are that might be well amended! This ship-money I like not altogether, nor these violent forced subsidies; yet less like I the

sordid puritanic knaves who do oppose them. Not that they know or understand the evil of the measures which they rail at, but that they would embarrass, and annoy, and if their means were mated to their will, perchance o’erturn the government from which those measures emanate ; not that they love their country, but that they hate their king ; because, being base themselves, they loathe the very name of what is high or generous, or noble ; because having nought to lose, even in England’s ruin, they may gain all in the midst of uproar and confusion. But enough said ! you shall receive their offer since so you will it, although I hold a promise of a borough from my Lord of Middleton, awaiting your acceptance ; for which—I speak it in all candour—I would far rather have you member, than for this beggarly psalm-singing body-corporate of Huntingdon. But enough said ! Bear with me, Edgar, for I am old and

choleric withal, and hasty ! And now to supper !
For John cook will be foaming an his goose-
pie be burned, or his beef boiled to rags, as
with o'erflowing eyes he swore to me they were
last night, and all through fault of mine !”

CHAPTER VI.

'Tis hard to part,
When youthful hearts with treasured dreams are high
Of sunny days, and calmest nights serene,—
A happy future!—but oh, harder far,
When dark anticipation veils the scene
With melancholy clouds, and hard at hand
Sits chill despair—that vulture of the soul—
Watching the latest gleam of hope expire,
To pounce her conscious prey.

TIME journeyed onward, and with a flight as rapid, when every day and hour was charged with tidings of some great event, with some terrific rumour, or some perilous forboding, as if

it had ebbed noiselessly away in peace and in obscurity. The golden days of Autumn had already flown—the last slow wain had dragged its freight to the piled thrashing-floor—the last flower had shed its petals scentless and colourless upon the frosted grass. The leaves that had for many weeks clothed grove and forest in a rich garb of many-coloured splendour, now detached themselves one by one from the sere branches, and fell whirling slowly in the heavy atmosphere, like hopes blighted before accomplishment, to the dark steamy earth—the glimpses of the sun were rarer, and more pallid than their wont, and often in the depth of night the mighty winds went forth, wailing as if in sorrow, over the faded glories of the year.

Nor were the signs of the times less gloomy than the tokens of the season. All England was in confusion and dismay—and both these hourly increasing till the one half of the world

was wellnigh maddened by its fears, the other by the excitement of its own fierce and stormy passions. To-day a rumour was abroad of mighty armaments levied beyond the sea, and even now preparing to pollute with foreign weapons the free soil of England, and to erect the power of her monarch, already stretched beyond all limits of constitutional sway, into absolute and self-controlling tyranny. On the next, a tale was rife that Pym, the champion of the people's cause, and king of their affections, had been assailed, perhaps even murdered, by the hired emissaries of a sovereign, stern and cold by nature, and rendered merciless and cruel by the extremity of terror.

Then came the one great accusation, swallowing up in its atrocity all lesser charges, all inferior crimes, as the sunshine drinks up and blots from heaven the fainter lustre of the stars ! The one great accusation at that time generally

credited by men of every class, except, perhaps, a few of the most confiding and most generous cavaliers, and since those days confirmed almost beyond the possibility of doubt,—that the Irish rebellion, with all its horrible features of midnight massacre, and midday conflagration, was the premeditated, coolly-calculated work of Charles and Henrietta;—the one great accusation, penetrating every breast, in every rank of persons, with mingled sentiments of pity, horror, hatred, and disgust; imbittering still more against him the foes of the misguided sovereign, and alienating from his side many of those devoted and enthusiastic spirits, that never would have swerved from their allegiance, so long as they had sense or being, had he ever shown himself in the most trivial circumstances constant, not to his faithful servants, but to his own true interests, or even to himself.

In the Commons' house the minds of men

were even more unsettled than in the world at large; parties ran daily higher, and with a greater share of virulence and private animosity than at any previous period; and indeed it seemed that the king himself was labouring as earnestly to the advantage of his enemies, the puritans, as they themselves could wish. At the first meeting of the parliament, a committee had been appointed to draw up a general remonstrance of the state of the kingdom, and the particular grievances it had sustained; which after its first nomination had, however, scarcely ever met, and was almost forgotten.

But now, during the causeless and protracted absence of the ill-fated monarch in the sister kingdom—irritated by his apathy with regard to bleeding Ireland—appreciating fully his dishonest motives, in lingering at a distance from his parliament—and goaded almost to madness by his attempt to seize or to assassinate, as many

did in truth believe, Argyle and Hamilton—the party came to the resolve of reproducing that momentous question, and in accordance with their views, upon Strode's motion, it was carried that “the committee of remonstrance be revived, and ordered without more delay to meet;” and time and place incontinently were appointed.

Within a few days of this measure, a bill of far more questionable character, and justified alone—if it might any way be justified—by the unwonted and most unbecoming violence of the spiritual lords, who lent themselves in every instance as willing instruments to aid the usurpation of the sovereign, and scrupled not to violate the spirit and the letter of the laws against the Romish church, was introduced, ordered by a majority of voices to be read, and, without any opposition worthy of remark, transmitted to the Lords, for the disabling the

bishops from the exercise of voting in the upper house, or of any temporal office throughout the kingdom.

Just at this critical and anxious juncture, with his accustomed rashness and inveterate obstinacy, Charles deemed it fitting to collate five preachers of undoubted eminence and learning, but known as well for principles of state the most obnoxious as for their talents, to as many sees vacant by death or by translation; doing this in absolute defiance, as it seemed, to the desires of the popular branch of legislation, and contrary to the advice of his most trustworthy and valuable councillors.

In the midst of the tumults—for to an extent which scarcely can be designated by a less forcible word was the violent struggle carried between the upper and the lower houses—consequent upon this doubtful measure, tidings arrived in London, that on a day appointed

having arranged all matters in that kingdom to the general satisfaction, His Majesty intended to depart from Scotland on his homeward progress; and straightways the committee offered the report of their proceedings, together with a draught of the remonstrance, to the House; which instantly, although divided much in sentiment, and, as many thought, in general opposed to this decisive stroke, proceeded to discuss it with a degree of bitterness and fury perhaps unprecedented except in the debates upon the case of Strafford.

In the mean while an answer had been returned to Ardenne by his constituents of Huntingdon, agreeing fully to the terms he had proposed, whereon to serve them in the Commons, as their representative and member; and urging him, so soon as it might be consistent with his leisure, to betake himself to London, there to assume his seat. All preparations had

been made for his departure ; chambers secured for him in Westminster ; his retinue and horses sent before him ; nay, even a day fixed, whereon again to leave, after so brief enjoyment of its serene and tranquil pleasures, his paternal home. He felt not, it is true, that terrible sensation of passionate and overwhelming sorrow, which drowns the hearts of the young at their first setting forth into the wide and cheerless world, from the dear roof that saw their birth !—much less that sullen and collected bitterness with which the exile gazes, ere he turn from them for ever, upon the scenes never before so beautiful or so beloved ! But he did feel a heavy and continual gloom clouding, he knew not wherefore, all his anticipations of the future—an ominous and all-engrossing sense of coming evil—a prophetic fear, that it would ne'er be his again to cast away the burden of his sorrows, and be, as it were, once again a

child in spirit, beside that old domestic hearth—a fear not justified, perhaps, by any clear perception, nor founded upon any evidence of judgment; but yet oppressing his mind, no less than the influence of a coming thunder-storm is often seen to agitate the lower grades of animal creation when not a speck of cloud is visible as yet above the clear horizon.

As far, indeed, as regarded any real or well-founded apprehensions, Ardenne had every following day less cause to dread a rupture with his father in consequence of any difference in politics; for so completely had the old man taken up the notion that his son intended to apply his nomination by the puritanic party to the advancement of the royal interests, that Edgar fruitlessly endeavoured to apprise him of the error, and to convince him of his own sincerity and singleness of purpose.

“Right! right! boy,” he would cry—

“ Never betray your counsel ! and in good sooth, thou hast a perilous part to play, and a politic—best vote a few times with the canting knaves—so better to throw dust in their eyes, that they discover not thy game ere it be fit time to disclose it; husbanding so thy powers as to aid our gracious master in his real straits, an it should come—which God avert—to such an issue !”

For a time, indeed, so utterly abhorrent was the smallest shadow of deception to his ingenuous mind and rigid sense of honour—he strenuously and sincerely strove to make Sir Henry comprehend his principles—his entire devotion to the laws and constitution of his country as established by the precedent of ages, not as interpreted by the corrupt and pensioned lawyers of the court—his firm attachment to the privilege of parliament as opposed to the prerogative of the crown—and, over all,

his absolute disgust at the late proceedings taken by the King, and in relation to the claim of ship-money especially, and to the infringement of the anti-catholic statutes. But finding all endeavours vain to overturn his preconceived opinion, he abandoned altogether the ungracious task, in an uncertain state of mind, bordering at one moment upon hope, at another on its opposite extreme, despair; arguing within himself, when brighter thoughts prevailed, that, as his father's violence of loyalty was even now so greatly modified as to permit him to allow the participation of corrupt men and the existence of evil measures in the councils of his kingly idol, his own course might so far tally with his views, or, at the worst, might differ from them only in so small particulars, as to call forth no very strenuous or lasting reprobation.

Again, when giving way to gloomier, though

perhaps more probable imaginations, foreseeing that the obstinate determination of the sovereign to dispense with parliaments, to recognise the laws of the land but so far as they should further his own imperious wishes—to rule, in short, as an absolute and arbitrary monarch—and the noble stand assumed by the delegates of the people in defence of the people's rights, would by no means be ever composed or reconciled, except by arbitration of the sword; and further, that in such a case, as certainly as he should be himself found warring in the ranks of freedom, so surely would Sir Henry arm to buckler the time-hallowed names of church and king, although the former should be almost Romish, and the latter utterly despotic.

Thus was the mind of Edgar balanced, during the interval which elapsed between his first acceptance of the proffered honour and his departure for the metropolis—its moods as

various as the changes of an April day; now bright with sunshiny and azure skies, now blackened with the scudding rack, and howling with the stormy gusts.

The days, however, wore onward: the chase in the morning, with its heart-stirring sounds and high associations, or the stroll through the highly-cultivated grounds about the homestead, or the familiar visit to the independent yeomen or the sturdy peasantry, consumed the earlier hours; and, when the midday meal was ended, the ramble in the beautiful broad park, beneath the autumnal trees, with his beloved cousin—the ramble finished, as it seemed to them, almost before it commenced — beguiled the hours till twilight, when the lamps would all be lighted and the guests assembled in the lordly hall, or the smaller circle gathered about the parlour fire, to cheat the evening with lay and legend, or with sprightly converse, more

pleasantly than with loud minstrelsy and the gay dance.

The days, however, wore onward, and although none else perceived the constant cloud that dwelt on Edgar's brow, Sibyl had marked and understood it; and, as if in sympathy, her own transparent skin showed less and less the healthful hues of her elastic blood; and her deep eye was always dimmer than its wont, and often tearful, as it would dwell unnoticed on the overshadowed features of her lover, now constantly absorbed, as he had rarely been of yore, in fits of meditation, abstracting him entirely from the business or the pleasure of the moment.

After the morning following Edgar's return to Woodleigh, although on other topics there had been no reserve, however trivial, no hesitancy or concealment of action, thought, or motive, neither had again alluded to the subject of

their interrupted conversation; he shunning it, not merely because he *could have* nought agreeable, but because he *had* nought definite, which to communicate, and therefore was unwilling, needlessly perhaps, to cloud her prospects with certainly a distant, and, not improbably, a causeless terror; and she not pressing it, because, relying with a pure and holy confidence upon her promised husband—a confidence inferior only to her trust in her Creator!—because seeing, that be his secret sorrow what it might, he felt it not his duty at that time to impart it to her ear; and because she would have scorned herself could she have entertained the thought, but for a moment, of obtaining that from his fondness which his judgment would not warrant his bestowing!

It was not long, however, before Sibyl had another and a surer reason for her silence; for, with that wondrous shrewdness which a woman's

heart possesses in divining and discovering any thing which may affect it in its own particular province, she fancied herself ere long to be the mistress of the causes of his hidden grief; she saw the struggle in his heart between his love for her and for his father, and his devotion to his country. She knew that in the breast of such a man the struggle could last but for a single hour ere it must be decided. She suffered no diminution of her self-respect, no fretting of her vanity, as she acknowledged that her own claims to his affection must surely yield to the overruling *amor patriæ*; and, while she sorrowed with the deep sincerity of a true and loving heart, over the election which she was assured he had already made, she yet thought she hardly could desire that he had decided otherwise.

There was even yet another cause!—a lingering hope that she might yet have been in error

—that she might falsely have interpreted the outward workings of his mind—a fear of banishing that lingering hope, by questioning of that which she most yearned to know—a dread of learning that, which even now almost knowing true, she would have given worlds to know unreal.

The last morning broke, and the last sun arose, which was to shine upon Edgar, a dweller in his father's house. It was a clear, bright cheerful morning. A slight touch of frost on the preceding evening had imparted just enough of coldness to the atmosphere to render it more pure and bracing; but the sun shone warmly out, and the dew sparkled laughingly upon the shrubs and grass, and the rooks clove the liquid firmament with their exulting wings, at an immeasurable pitch—all nature seeming to rejoice with a more healthful and elastic joy than in the fullest flush of summer. It was, in

short, just such a morning as would make the careless and unburdened heart sit lighter on its throne—as would impel the mounted traveller to give his horse the spur, and let his spirits loose by a free and fearless gallop—as would swell the pedestrian's chest, and plant his stride more firmly on the sod, and perchance uncloset his lips with something of a song; but it was such an one withal, as would cause one departing from some loved and lovely scene to need a stronger effort to tear himself away, than he would have been called on to exert, had the skies been lowering, and the day in nearer unison with his own sad sensations. Accordingly, the tone of Edgar's feelings was unusually depressed, even as the aspect of all visible things was fairer than the promise of the season; his mien was careworn, and at times it scarcely would have been too strong a term to call it haggard; his gait was various and irregular,

hasty at times and hurried, and at times unusually slow ; his eye was often fixed on vacancy, and those who would address him were compelled to speak their wishes more than once, ere they appeared to reach his understanding.

The earlier hours were consumed in preparations, till high noon came round, and he sat down to the last meal he was for many a month to taste in fellowship with those who sat beside him ; while the unwelcome thought would still intrude itself, that it might be indeed the very last. In silence, then, if not in sorrow, dinner went by, until the board was cleared of all, save cup and flagon, and the old visitors withdrew, and Sibyl vanished—to attend perchance her household duties, or more probably to give, in private, vent to the gushing feelings which she in public, was compelled to smother—and sire and son were left without companions.

For a while the old man spoke not, resting his

head upon his hand, as if in anxious thought, and although once or twice he raised it, and made as if about to speak, he yet seemed at a loss for words. At length, as if ~~made~~ with something of an effort, he aroused himself, filled up his goblet from the stoup of Bourdeaux wine before him, and pushing it toward his son, motioned that he should follow the example—gazed for a moment wistfully upon the clouded features that met his eye, and with a nod and smile that vainly struggled to be lightsome, emptied his wine-cup.

“Come, Edgar, come!” he said, “this gloom will never do! Cheer up, kind heart, cheer up! Thou takest on more sadly now, methinks, than when ^{you} we left us for thy three years’ turn of service in the Low Countries! But I can see how sits the wind—old though I be, and past these toys this many a winter’s day;—I mind when I was a young cavalier, and not—although I say it

who should not—the most unlikely in the court of good Queen Bess (we ne'er shall look upon her like again),—I mind how I was wont to droop at parting from poor Alice! Sibyl, though passing fair, is nought for beauty, to what she was! Well—too well—do I mind it!”

Ardenne, who had shaken off his air of abstraction for a moment as his father drank to him, was again relapsing into the same listless mood on perceiving that his words were rather unconnected musings, than such as called for answer or remark; but when the name of Sibyl caught his ear, his eye lightened and the colour rushed to his brow as he perceived that his inmost thoughts were about to be subjected to the keen probe of mental surgery.

“Ay! ay! I can see plain how sits the wind,” continued Sir Henry, without pausing for a reply. “Though why you should be so cast down, I may not comprehend so readily.

Your cousin Sibyl, I know right well, has long possessed your love, and as long too returned it. That I have in all things approved of this I need not tell you now, seeing that you must well perceive that knowing this, and not prohibiting, was to all needful ends consenting. That you should be cast down at leaving of so sweet a girl as Sibyl, is—I gainsay it not—right natural; nathless I cannot but imagine that you do apprehend some greater evil than a mere temporary separation. Now, boy, to the point! You would espouse your cousin Sibyl—she says not nay!—and if my interference be a cause of dread to you, I say but this, that you have cruelly misjudged your father's heart! My benison on you both! I know no sweeter balm for all the manifold griefs of age, than to make, and to see, the youthful happy. So set your soul at ease, brave boy, you shall wed Sibyl when you will; and the more quickly—the more

gladly and more surely shall I witness it. You start for Westminster to-night; and I have meditated somewhat often now of late on passing this next Christmas-tide in London. Sibyl, poor child, hath seen nought of court gaiety nor of the world as yet, and this is but a lonesome place in winter,—the more so now that half the gentles of the land will, as it seems too likely, be detained all winter in the city by these protracted sittings of the Houses which men speak of. I have determined now to give you a commission. Choose a fitting mansion—whether to rent or purchase I care not a marvel—in the Strand if you may, if not in Westminster or Charing. See it right nobly furnished, and write me when 'tis done. I will bring Sibyl thither straightway, and as you may not spend these holydays with us, why we will keep them up with thee, I warrant me. And now away to Sibyl,—say to her all that I have said

to thee, and what beside seems fitting to your melancholy mood. Thou needst not me, I trow, to woo her. Fix, if you may prevail on her, your bridal day at once—whene'er ye list 'twixt Christmas-tide and Easter. Be happy, Edgar, be happy, and let me see you so.—Such is my only wish this side eternity,—before I go to my long home.”

“ My good—my generous—my gracious father !” cried Ardenne, affected to weeping, as he threw himself upon the old man's neck. “ Too good ! too generous !”

“ Tush ! tush, boy !—none of this !” exclaimed the veteran, humming away the husky weakness from his throat, “ none of this ! but away with you to Sibyl—she is a more fitting object for these raptures, than an old weather-beaten trunk like me. Away with you ! But hark ye—here is the ring that plighted my departed angel. Let me behold it on *her* hand, whom I have

loved the best—nay, I might say, the only one of women, since my own Alice left me to drag out my pilgrimage alone without one hope to cheer it save that of meeting her once more, when it shall be, O Lord, thy merciful and blessed will !”

So bent was the old knight on his benevolent design—it would have been of no avail, even had Edgar been so minded, to strive to alter or oppose his projects. They were not such, however, as to leave a possible desire to his son which would not be, by their accomplishment, at once achieved. He had no words to answer—but the hot blood rushed tumultuously through his veins—and his strong frame quivered visibly with the excitement of his spirits, as he hurried from the hall to seek his beautiful betrothed—“Once mine, and all beside is nothing! Once mine, there will be no more struggle! Duty and pleasure will go

hand in hand! Once wedded, and no difference of opinion then may put those asunder, whom God has joined together!"

Such were the thoughts that thronged with irresistible impetuosity, and with the speed of light, upon his busy brain; but he had not made six steps beyond the threshold before reflection changed the prospect.—Would it be noble—honourable—upright," thus did he commune with himself—"would it be worthy of an Ardenne—the supporter of an unblotted fame of generations,—nay, rather, would it not be sordid—base—dishonest and degrading to the lowliest gentleman, to win a credulous confiding woman by a fraud—by an implied, if not a spoken, lie? To let her wed, believing him she wedded a supporter of the cause she deemed most holy, a soldier armed for the warfare which alone she looked upon as just and sacred;—to let her wed in haste, and then find out at leisure that she

had been deceived—deceived by whom—by him she had just sworn to *honour*? Not so!” he cried aloud—“It shall not be, by Heaven! She shall know all—every thing! Knowing she shall accept my hand—or knowing cast me off, but not, at least, despise me!”

As his mind arrived at its mature though swift conclusion, he reached the door of Sibyl's oriel parlour—with a hesitating hand he struck the panel, and so slight was the sound that it conveyed no tidings to the inmate—at least it was unanswered. Again he knocked, and louder than before—he listened, and still all was silence. Supposing her he sought to have gone forth, he had already turned away to follow her, when a faint noise, as of a person breathing heavily, or perhaps gently weeping, attracted his attention; he knocked a third time, and then—though still unbidden, entered. She was within—she was alone! In the prostration—in the absolute abandon-

ment of feminine and hopeless grief! Her face was buried in her hands, as she lay stretched at length on the broad pillowed settle which encircled the bay-window. Her light brown hair, which had broke loose from the confinement of her silken head-gear, flowed in redundant waves over the voluptuous outline of her shoulders, trailing down even to the ground. Her features were, of course, concealed; but the large pearly tears, forcing their way one by one between her fingers, had already left a visible trace of moisture on the damask cushions, while the convulsive starts that agitated her entire frame told even more the depth and anguish of her sorrow, than all her weeping.

“Sibyl,” he whispered, stealing with noiseless steps over the three-piled Persian carpet till he was close beside her, “my own—own Sibyl!”—there was a deep fond pathos in his

musical accents, which no description could express—a liquid melancholy tenderness that sunk directly to the heart.—“My own—own Sibyl!” and with the most respectful delicacy he lifted her from her recumbent attitude—“and weeping too for me!—but weep no longer, dearest one—I come—I come!—Oh grant it, God! that it may be so—to wipe those tears away—to make thee mine—for ever!”

She gazed upon him for a second's space, wildly—distrustfully;—then, as she perceived his earnest air, and marked the hope that kindled in his smile, then brighter thoughts prevailed; and with the sudden strange revulsion, abandoning herself to the full tide of her warm passionate feelings, she sank half fainting on the bosom of her lover.

“Oh grant it, Father of all mercies! that this too mighty treasure shall indeed be mine!” he murmured fervently, as he supported her,

and with considerate expressions of calm fondness recalled her gradually to her self-possession; suppressing every sentiment that might embarrass her returning consciousness, that might in any wise offend or agitate her girlish sensibilities; holding her hand in his the while, but with a quiet unimpassioned pressure, liker to the expression of a kind brother's love than to the rapturous devotion of a youthful suitor; soothing her with the gentlest tones of his familiar voice, till she was at the least sufficiently composed to listen to his self-restrained and self-accusing pleadings.

“Sibyl,” he said at length, as her deeply-drawn sighs subsided, and her tears ceased to flow in such unnatural profusion—“dear cousin, soon—soon, I trust, to be addressed by a far dearer title, I have much—much that I would say to you before I go from hence, never unless

at your permission to return!—much from my father—for myself yet more!—Dry your tears, dearest, dry them I beseech you—it is agony to me to look on them!—Dry them, and listen to me, that we may, if it be Heaven's pleasure, be happy as the happiest of earth's inhabitants!"

“Say on”—she difficultly faltered forth the words—“dear Edgar—with my whole soul I do attend you!”

“Not here,” he answered, “sweet one—and not yet! But do your mantle on, and walk forth with me for a little space. You are too greatly agitated yet, calmly to hear, and freely to decide on that, which for your happiness—for your life's sake, you must consider warily and well! The pleasant sunshine, the fresh grateful air, and above all, the peaceful and quiescent scenery will tranquilize your mind; moreover, I would not that this sun should set

unwitnessed by us twain together. You will go forth then, dearest—will you not, Sibyl?”

A smile exquisitely sweet glancing from out her tears was her sole token of assent, as she disengaged herself half blushing from his supporting arms, and gathering her dishevelled tresses folded them simply, but in the most perfect taste, around her classically moulded temples.

“Wait for me in the vestibule,” she said, “I will be there, ere you shall have the time to miss me!” and she vanished from the room, leaving a stronger hope in Ardenne’s breast than he had entertained many a day. He was assured in his own mind, beyond the possibility of doubt, that she had marked the secret conflict of his soul, that she had penetrated his sole mystery, and was aware already of his apprehensions as to the part which it might ere long be his duty to sustain, whether it should lie in the grave or

subtle forum, or in the lamentable field of civil strife; and he now listened to the flattering voice within, which whispered that it might well be, a maiden so affectionate, so warm, and, above all, so deeply and devotedly attached, would overlook the difference in their political creeds, as counterbalanced, rendered nugatory and a thing of nought, by their entire harmony of soul on every other subject. It might well be that one so strong herself in principles of honour and integrity would find more to admire in the inflexible and stern uprightness which will not sacrifice one particle of conscience—one straw's bulk of that which it considers duty—before the shrine of its most intimate and near affections—than to rebuke or reprobate in the opinions or the principles on which that duty hinged.

But Edgar had not long time to waste in thought or speculation; for as he reached the entrance of the hall, the form he loved so well

to look upon came gliding down the staircase, wrapped in her walking robe, fitted above the waist with accurate precision to the model of her unrivalled shape, but full below and flowing, of dark velvet furred at the cape and cuffs with the most costly minever; and wearing on her head a cap of ermine, its silken crown and lining protruding from above the border of deep fur, and hanging gracefully down, with a white ostrich feather drooping over it, so as to flush one delicate cheek more warmly than its sister with a tint borrowed from its own bright crimson. With a passionate and fitful light, far different from the calmness of their wonted radiance, the eyes of Edgar dwelt upon the finely-modelled person and the features, not the less exquisitely fair that they now wore a melancholy downcast aspect, of her on whose acceptance or denial of his present suit his all of hope was fearfully suspended. So long, in-

deed, and evident was that fixed gaze of admiration, and so much was she pained by its expression, that the bashful blood rushed like a torrent to brow, cheek, and neck, with blushes scarcely natural, so vivid was their hectic colour.

Perceiving instantly the cause of her confusion, with an air of deep humility he lowered his offending eyes, and as he took her hand to lead her forth—"Pardon," he whispered in low reverential tones,—“pardon me, gentle cousin, my most unwitting and involuntary fault!—if fault it be,” he added with a voice that faltered, and then abruptly paused, as if he were unable to complete the sentence.

A quiet pressure of the fingers that yet lingered in his tender grasp, replied at once and reassured him; and in the silence caused by feelings or by thoughts too powerful for utterance—how widely different from that of apathy

or dulness!—they for the last time wandered forth into the pleasant solitudes of the broad sylvan chase.

Throughout the greater part of its extent, this ornamented tract, although diversified enough by change of dale and upland to redeem its beauties from the charge of tameness or monotony, was rather of a level than a broken character; its charms were chiefly of that tranquil and composing cast which is found rather in expanses of deep meadow-land, carpeted by a sward so fresh and so luxuriant as to lose little of its verdure even in the dead months of the winter—in the massive foliage of the scattered clumps or more continuous groves of stately timber trees, and in the sheets of limpid but unrippled water, than in the features of a scenery, which if more romantic is far less alluring, if more enchanting to the first astonished glance, bears not so well the test of daily and familiar observation.

Towards its northern and north-western boundaries, however, the ground was swelling and uneven; the hills heaved up more boldly from the valleys, which were in places so abrupt and narrow as almost to deserve the name of glens or dingles; and often wore a coronet of gray and rifted sandstone above the purple heather that clothed their flanks with a dark purple mantle wheresoever the soil was too poor or too shallow to support the taller growth of hazel, birch, and mountain-ash which clustered round their bases, or straggled up their sides where any casual streamlet had worn a channel to protect them from the western gales, and afforded by its waters a grateful although scanty nutriment to their dwarfed and thirsty roots.

Imbosomed in these rugged eminences, at a short mile's distance from the manor, there lay a little tarn, or mountain lake, scarce larger than an artificial pool, but so deep that its glassy

waters shone black as polished jet even beneath the azure skies of summer. Narrow, however, as it was, it yet could boast its islets—two, fringed from the water's edge with tangled underwood above which waved three or four tall trees—the third, a bold and barren rock whereon some feudal ancestor had perched his solitary fastness, dismantled now and roofless. On every side but one the hills sank steeply down to the lake's brink, leaving no space for the adventurous foot of man, feathered with coppice springing from every rift or crevice of their rocky sides—but on that one a turfy glade sloped gently to the marge, where it was bordered by a stripe of silver sand which formed a bright and snowy frame to the dark mirror it enclosed. Just where the turf and sand united a single and gigantic oak, known as the 'Friar's tree' for miles around, reared its short massive trunk, garnished with limbs as tortuous and forked as

the antlers of the wild herds that loved to rub their budding horns against it in the early springtide, but supporting, even in the flush of summer, only a spare and scanty garland of green leaves, which rustled now all sere and yellow in the melancholy breath of autumn.

Immediately beneath the shadow of this forest-patriarch, and partly overlapped by the encroachment of its twisted roots, lay a huge block of deep-red freestone, bearing the marks of rude and half-obliterated sculptures, in which some village antiquarian had traced or fancied a resemblance to a cowled and sandalled figure, whence the prevailing appellation of the tree; which, ancient as that relic evidently seemed, had probably been in its prime already, when there it had been placed—placed only to survive the memory of the event or actor it had fondly been intended to immortalize. It might have been the cover of a tomb—it might have

been a monument designed to celebrate some great or wonderful achievement—but whatsoever was its pristine use or destination, it afforded now a pleasant seat, cushioned with soft luxurious mosses, and sheltered equally from summer heat or wintry gales by the huge stem and gnarled boughs that overhung it.

A lovely and romantic spot this was—so still, so lonely, so sequestered from the eye by intervening thickets, that, although situate at scarce a bowshot from the most frequented walks, it yet was rarely visited but by some passing forester or some true lover of the undecorated face of nature. For this cause, perhaps, it had ever been a favourite haunt of Sibyl, who, when a fairy maiden of fifteen, was wont to resort thither with book, lute, or pencil, as the fancy of the moment prompted, and for no other reason had it been the usual termination of her young wooer's wanderings.

What was the aim of Edgar in choosing this fair solitude to be the scene of that most sacred audience which he had come forth to demand, he could not have, perhaps, himself explained. It might be he had formed some half-confessed and indistinct idea, that here, in the familiar trysting-place—the home of such sweet recollections, the shrine of such innumerable hopes—she would ‘lean to the soft side of the heart’—would be more liable to yield herself to fond and passionate impressions, than to weigh matters with an equable calm scrutiny. It might be, that habit merely and the trick of old association had conducted his feet thither, while the mind was far removed from thought of time or place: or it might be that, wise and philosophic as his spirit was, there yet lay dubiously concealed within it one of those strange superstitious touches—those creeds of the heart, not of the judgment—from which the bosoms of so

few, even the coolest and most stern inquirers, can altogether wean themselves—one of these fancies, which we all at times have felt, that some peculiar spot, or hour, or person, is secretly connected with the clue and crisis of our destiny—is as it were the hinge whereon the portals of our fortune turn, opening to our steps the unknown paths of future good or evil.

Whatever were Edgar's thoughts, however, during their silent progress to the Friar's tree, scarcely had he placed Sibyl on the monumental stone, and stretched himself before her on the dry white sand, ere he poured forth in a voice of so sweet harmony as might have well beguiled the ear and won the heart of the most determined votary of celibate, a tide of language fraught with such eloquence and yet so practical in meaning—so deep in sentiment, and yet so pointed in expression, that few lips, perhaps, but his could have delivered it, without incurring

some reproach of studied insincerity, or awakening some feeling of distrust. He told her of his hopes, his doubts, his terrors—he told her how a cloud, he knew not wherefore, had overshadowed his horizon, chilling as it were the very sources of his most permanent and warm affections;—he told her, how he valued her the most of all things earthly—the most of *all* things save his God, his country, and his honour! How to him her wedded love would be indeed the all-in-all—capable of making that which else were misery the highest and most pure enjoyment;—how, to win it, he would lay down willingly rank, name, fame, fortune, every thing save virtue! He told her, that without that crowning gift, he should, though wealthier than the wealthiest, bear but a beggared heart—though girt with myriads of friends, be desolate and lonely—though dwelling in his very birthplace, be a divorced and homesick exile!

He told her of the violent and ceaseless strife between his passion and his conscience—of his profound devotion to herself, battling and scarcely to be overcome by his more deep devotion to his country's weal.

“It may be,” he continued, “that I am but a timorous dreamer — but a trembling visionary, shaking at causeless and unreal terrors, that the trials, which I shudder merely at foreseeing, shall never come to the proof; but this is what I dread—and what, though dreading, I may not, if it come to pass, avoid or shrink from, even to win what were to me a thousand times more dear than life. The miseries of intestine war let loose to devastate our smiling country!—A wild and bloody strife, dividing brother against brother, sire against son, husband—sweet Sibyl—husband against wife!—A strife between a king determined to

be absolute—a people, to be free! If these things come to pass—though my life be barren, and my deathbed deserted—yea! though my heart be broken in the conflict—yet must I be for ever the sworn soldier of my country's freedom. It may, however, be—Heaven grant it so—that I do falsely calculate the signs of coming wrath;—it may moreover be that as I am, so are you a friend to liberty and justice, more than a worshipper of kings! and if so—all shall yet be well. My father, Sibyl, my old kind father, hath proffered freely his consent—hath urged me to obtain your promise, that you will be my own before this coming winter shall have made way for spring flowers—hath implored me 'that he may see us happy—such is his only wish this side eternity—before he go to his long home!'—Be mine, then, Sibyl—oh, be mine, ere the fierce storm shall burst, which

may divide us, and for ever—be mine to cheer, to guide, to comfort, and to bless—be mine for weal and wo—for time and for eternity!”

While he had spoken, though her lips quivered often, and parted more than once as if she would have interrupted him—though her colour went and came in brief and fitful flashes—the lovely girl had never once withdrawn her eyes from his pale face, pale with the struggle of contending passions, nor yet relaxed her pressure of his cold damp hand; and as he paused from his deep-souled and eager pleading, she replied at once, though her voice faltered, and the big tears slid down her cheeks.

“It is, then,” she said, “as I dreaded; and our young hopes have been but as a morning vision! Oh! Edgar, Edgar! I have thought, I have hoped, I have prayed, that these things might not be; and yet, too—oh! too surely have I known they must!” and she hurried

onward with her speech, as if she feared that she should lack the strength to act up to her resolution. "Men will say," she went on with increasing passion, "and say *truly*—but I care not—that it is unmaidenly in me to speak, in words, how madly, how devotedly, I love you! My hope of hopes has been—you cannot doubt it, Edgar—no, no, you cannot—to know myself your wife; and now my hopes are changed to anguish and despair. But, think not that I blame you—that I love you, honour you, adore you, one thousandth part the less, when I say—God grant me strength to bear it!—when I say, that we can never, never now be one. *Your* father has to *me* been as—nay, more—more than a father. To his heart your defection—such will he term and feel it—your defection from the loyalty of your high race, will strike a wound, that but one other blow could aggravate or deepen. Were I to fall off likewise, he

would die, Edgar—die,—and leave to us his sole bequest, a father's malison. No, no! I must stay with him, must console the old man in his barren and unfriended sorrows, must soothe his cares and turn aside his anger, lest it wax hotter and more deadly than you, you Edgar, shall be able to endure. Nor is this all. I am a poor weak girl—a frail, confiding creature, of a sex whose duty and whose nature is obedience — obedience to our king, our husband, our God! I argue not!—I hope not, fancy not, that I can change your judgment, founded, as it must be, on firm conviction; nor would I change it if I could: that which in women is nature, virtue, may well in men be cowardice and crime. Your intellect is strong, and wise, and wonderful,—mine, womanish and weak. Nor should I love and venerate you as I do, could you surrender up your wisdom at the bidding of my weakness! Then, as I do

respect your scruples, respect mine also. The sapling bends, indeed, to the wild blast that bows it; but when the hurricane is overpast, it stands no less erect than the proud oak that yielded not an inch to the storm's fury. I in my weakness—you in your strength,—we are alike immovable. Yours I *can* not be now—*may* not be ever!—but of this be certain; wedded or single, royalist or republican, living or in death, you only shall I love, you only honour—honour and love more deeply, that I know you greater in adherence to that which I must deem fancied and erroneous duty, than did you think as I. There is one hope for us, Edgar—my Edgar—*one!*—If this wild storm pass by—if the green homes of England be unstained with native blood—and how more fervently than ever shall I now pray they be so—then may we yet be happy!”

The blood rushed coldly to his heart as he

heard her out; nor, though he had expected every word she uttered, was the shock less stunning, or the anguish lighter, than if the stroke had fallen on him unaware. Too well, however, did he know, and too entirely respect the principles which doomed him to eternal and unutterable sorrow, to speak one syllable in answer or entreaty.

“One kiss,” he murmured through his set teeth; “one last kiss, my own lost Sibyl!” and she fell upon his bosom unresisting, and her white arms were twined about his neck with a convulsive clasp, and their cold lips mingled in a long embrace that had no taste of passion or of pleasure, and their tears flowed together in that gush of unchecked misery.

Before an hour had passed, Ardenne had left the mansion of his fathers. The old knight wondered, and was grieved, but silent; he saw at an eye's glance that his own hopes, his first

born's happiness, had been dashed rudely down; but to imagine wherefore, conjecture was itself at fault. He wept upon his neck, blessed him, and sent him forth! A pale form, indistinctly seen through the fast-gathering twilight, stood in the oriel window as Edgar slowly mounted; but the burst of agonizing sobs that followed his departure, was distinctly audible.—Enough! Timanthes veiled the face, on which the extremity of sorrow was engraved in characters so fearful as to defy the utmost skill of human portraiture.

CHAPTER VII.

This is true liberty, when freeborn men,
Having to advise the public, may speak free,
Which he who can, and will, deserves high praise ;
Who neither can, nor will, may hold his peace ;
What can be juster in a state than this ?

MILTON, *from Euripides.*

ON a dark and gloomy afternoon, in the latter days of November, Ardenne, having already gone through all the necessary steps preliminary to his entering on his novel duties, and having devoted a few days to renewing ancient intimacies, or forming new relations, with some of the

more leading men of either party, took his way, for the first time, toward the honoured precincts of St. Stephen's, around the walls of which, now, alas ! levelled to the ground for ever, the collective eloquence of ages had shed even then a halo of more than mortal glory.

The House had been some time in session, when he entered, and, to his almost irrepressible surprise, in passing to his seat the object that first met his eye was the ungainly figure of the stranger, who had succoured him near Royston, habited as heretofore described in garments coarse, unseemly, and ill-made, standing beside the table which, at times, he violently struck with his clenched hand, and speaking in a sharp croaking voice against delay in the discussion of some motion then before the House.

It did not seem to Edgar, as he looked hastily around him, that the members listened with much attention to the fiery but somewhat in-

volved declamations of this worthy; but after a few moments' survey, his notice was attracted by the bent brows and compressed lips of a considerable number—gravely attired and stern-looking men, who sat apart even from those who were completely recognised as favourers of sweeping measures of reform, and ever and anon responded to the sentiments expressed by the speaker with a deep hum or sullen cheer of approbation. He could see too, that Hampden, with whom he had advanced already beyond the earliest steps of friendly intercourse, was not inattentive to the words of this strange-looking personage; although at times a smile would flit across his comely features at some wild undigested thoughts, or strong denunciation fiercely disproportionate to that against which it was levelled.

He had not, however, much space for observation, since the orator, who, it seemed, had

wellnigh finished his harangue ere he came into the assembly, now resumed his seat, and was at once succeeded by a youthful gentleman, whom Edgar recognised for Lucius Carey, Viscount Falkland, of an exterior so prepossessing, that in another man it would have been the principal attraction, though in this instance it was but the goodly shrine of a surpassing soul. His form was slight, but elegantly framed—his countenance, of singular and softened beauty, had for its most obvious traits, a low fair forehead, from which the waves of his light-brown or almost flaxen hair hung down in natural curls below his cheeks—a full blue eye, well-opened and expressive—a bright complexion—and a lip, rich, ripe, and wooing as a woman's. He was clad handsomely in doublet, short trunk hose, and cloak of dark blue velvet, slashed and lined with rich white taffeta, and was in all respects a person whose appearance would denote a man

of birth and bearing. His voice, as he began to speak, was sweet and tunable, and although weak at first, increased in energy and power as he proceeded, till Ardenne felt that he had never listened heretofore to any one combining, in so eminent a degree, persuasiveness and strength of language.

From the Lord Falkland's words, Edgar quickly gathered, that the measure under consideration was no other, than the famous and much-contested bill of 'general remonstrance, which it appeared had been at this late hour brought forward by the opposition party, when the morning had been wasted in minor and unprofitable questions, with the hope of smuggling it, as it were, through the House during the absence of many, its most known opponents. The speech of the young nobleman was luminous, though brief, and touching in no respect on the principles or object of the bill, went clearly and

directly to the point, asserting that it should not, at that irregular and most indecent hour, be forced upon the assembly unprepared at least, if not reluctant to consider it.

Loudly applauded by the moderate party, as well as by the open antagonists of the measure, throughout the whole of his speech, and not less warmly, though more sparingly, at times by its impartial and sincere espousers—Hampden, and Pym, and Hollis—he concluded with a motion that the House should presently adjourn, and that this question should be entered upon the next morning at nine of the clock, and every clause debated, the speaker in the chair.

As he sat down, a dozen members rose at once on opposite sides, and for some minutes all was clamour and confusion—trampling of feet, loud cries of “ Question ! ”—“ Order ! ”—and “ Go on ! ”—mixed with vociferated names of favourite orators, called on to utter their opi-

nions—at length, Lenthal, the Speaker of the House, with his clear sonorous voice, enforced obedience to the chair, and quiet was again restored.

Lord Falkland's motion instantly was seconded by Hampden, in a few words, forcibly but simply urging the necessity, that this great question must be freely discussed and openly by all who shall decide to take a part therein. The House was cleared for question, and the adjournment carried with few dissenting voices.

There was but little tarrying within the body of the house, but as they passed into the lobby and down the parliament stairs, men fell into small knots of two or three, discoursing, some on the occurrences of the discussion just concluded, and some on matters of more general and varied interest.

It was at this moment, just as Edgar fell into a group, in which he had observed the figures of

Hyde (in afterdays more celebrated as Lord Clarendon and Chancellor of England), St. John, Lord Digby, Colepepper, and Hampden—all spirits in some sort congenial to each other, all being favourers, ostensibly at least, though differing in mode and measure, of reform both in church and state—that the orator, whom he had judged at the first sight to be Lord Falkland, passed by so closely as almost to brush his person with his cloak, deeply engaged in conversation with his mysterious fellow-traveller. This latter cast a glance of recognition toward him, accompanied by a short unceremonious nod, though without making any pause, or breaking off in his discourse, which he continued in such tones as reached the ears of Ardenne. “But, verily,” he said, “I see not wherefore you would have it thus put off, for this day would right quickly have decided it.”

“There would not have been time enough,”

replied the other shortly—"for it would sure take some debate."

"A |very sorry one! my lord, if any," answered the puritan, who was already passing out of sight, when Edgar touched the shoulder of John Hampden, whom he had previously addressed.

"I pray you, of your courtesy," he whispered, "Master Hampden, tell me, who is yon slovenly and clownish-looking man in converse with my Lord of Falkland, for I do see he is on your side, by his warm speech to-day."

"That sloven,"* answered Hampden—and in afterdays, when the undaunted breast of him who spake was mouldering in its bloody cerements, not the least noble victim of that

* This very remarkable and prophetic speech was actually uttered by Hampden in reply to the question as given above of Lord Digby; in the first year of the Long Parliament; *i. e.* at a date a little *earlier* than that assigned to it in the text.

lamentable strife, his auditor remembered those prophetic words—"whom you see before you, hath no ornament in his speech. That sloven, I say, if we should ever come to a breach with the King, which God forbid! in such a case I say, that sloven will be the greatest man in England."

"Indeed!" said Ardenne, thoughtfully—"indeed! I had not thought of him so highly, and yet I do believe, nay I am well assured, I have encountered him before. His name?"

"His name is Cromwell," replied the patriot—"Oliver Cromwell—member now for the good town of Cambridge, and little known as yet, or listened to, save by a few austere religionists—yet of great parts!—unwearied diligence—undaunted courage—penetration, that intuitively reads the wariest hearts—and perseverance that will yield to nothing human! That you have met him I can well believe—at

leastwise he doth know, and reckons of *you* highly! You will be here to-morrow, Master Ardenne," he continued after a momentary pause, "and with *us*, I trust! If we should lose this bill, it will, I fear me much, go hard with England's liberties."

"Here I shall be, past question," answered Edgar. "I scarce should hold myself an honest man, were I to quit my station in the crisis of the storm; although," he continued with a smile,—“although that station be a new one, and its occupant but strange and inexperienced. Here shall I be, but more you must not ask of me. How I shall vote, or if indeed at all, till I have heard both reasons and objections I may not easily decide. Wherefore, good Master Hampden, if you do care in truth for the assistance of my vote, you were best call to aid that eloquence and depth of reasoning, whereof I hear men bear such testimony; and so convince

me that my country's weal requires it of my hand! Give you good night, fair gentlemen," he added with a courteous motion toward the company. "We meet again to-morrow."

"If you be not in more than common haste," said Hampden, laying a slight detention on his arm, as he turned round to leave the lobby, "I will entreat you tarry, while I speak ten words with my Lord Digby. Your lodging lies, if I mistake not, this side Charing, and my road is the same. If you can wait on me five minutes at the farthest, I will rejoice to have your homeward company; and will upon the way, I do assure you, exert what reasons I possess to win you to conviction."

Ardenne assented; nor did the minutes which elapsed while that high-minded patriot remonstrated, as it would seem by his quick energetic whispers, with the tergiversating noble, pass heavily; as he conversed with the distin-

guished men who seemed to give — desirous each, perhaps, of winning to his respective faction a partisan so like to prove of weight, in the equally poised state of parties—that eager and respectful heed to every word he uttered, which cannot fail to please the minds even of those the least accessible to ordinary adulation. With a glance pregnant of meaning, and an admonition strongly urged, although its import could not be distinguished by the bystanders, Hampden turned from Lord Digby, and announced his readiness to walk, flinging his cloak in several folds over his left arm, and bringing round his rapier's hilt to meet his grasp if needed—precautions not uncalled for in those times of fierce and virulent commotion.

As they passed down the stairs the men in waiting recognised their masters, and fell at once into their places; two moving on in front with lighted links or flambeaux, necessary in

those days when the most frequented thoroughfares of the metropolis could boast few lamps but those which graced the residence of some great noble—and two stepping along three paces in the rear, their eyes warily moving to and fro and watching with keen scrutiny the air of every passenger who met or overtook them, and their hands in frequent contact with the pommels of their swords. For, notwithstanding the eulogium passed some years before by a French resident of high distinction on the orderly and peaceful regulation of the English capital, in honourable contrast to the debauched and dangerous turbulence of Paris, party spirit at this time ran to such height, and tumults were so frequent between the factions recently accommodated with distinctive titles of cavaliers and roundheads—tumults in which much blood was spilt and even some lives lost; the sturdy citizens resisting with their bats and cudgels the rapiers of the dis-

banded officers and other desperadoes ever to be found about the palace of Whitehall—that few, whose purses could maintain such followers, esteemed it safe to walk the streets by night without their armed attendance, particularly such as were obnoxious to assault, or insult at the least, in consequence of party eminence or of political renown.

At a few steps distance from the House they encountered a stout body of the train-bands, well-equipped with muskets, swords, and bandoleers, forming a portion of the guards, which, on the news of the attempt against Argyle and Hamilton, the Commons had required to be detached for their protection by the Earl of Essex, at that time General-in-chief on this side Trent; and to this it might, perhaps, in some degree be owing that during their walk homeward no circumstance of annoyance or attack occurred, to interrupt the converse of these high-

minded men, who though but newly and imperfectly acquainted, already felt, each for the other, that reverential admiration, which is often the precursor to familiar friendship.

At the door of Ardenne's lodging, with feelings of increased respect and with renewed promises of a meeting on the morrow, they then parted—the one hastening to some nightly conclave, there to deliberate with his associate patriots on measures rife with England's weal—the other to stretch his limbs upon a sleepless couch, and ponder the effects of his accession to the popular party on his own fate and fortunes. Kind sleep, however, came at last, to seal up for a little space the sources of his deep disquietude, and to allay, until another sun should wake him to fresh struggles—fresh anxieties, the feverish tumults of his bosom.

Still, so engrossing was the subject, which last had occupied Edgar's mind before he sunk

into slumber, and so powerful the operation of his spirit even while the body was buried in what seemed absolute oblivion, that scarcely had the earliest indications of the wintry twilight crept through the fogs of the near river, ere he awoke, and starting instantly from his bed, began to do his garments on, summoning the while his sluggard followers to prepare his morning meal. But notwithstanding all his haste, so gloomy was the dawning, and so late, at that drear season, the uprising of the sun, that he had scarce the time to snatch a hasty morsel, before his horses were announced to bear him to St. Stephen's; and almost at the selfsame instant two gentlemen to speak with Master Ardenne; and, with the word, John Hampden entered the apartment, accompanied by a person of most "unusual" and forbidding aspect. Austere, fanatical, and gloomy, he might have been pronounced at the first sight

by any person moderately skilful at deciphering men's characters from the expression of their features; his dress would not perhaps entirely bear out the charge (for such, and a most grave one, was it deemed by the wild cavaliers) of puritanism; for, although uniform and rather grave in colour, it yet was cut with attention to the prevailing mode, as well as to the setting off a person infinitely less ungainly than his countenance was harsh and extraordinary. His hat, too, which he carried in his hand, was decorated with a feather; and his sword hung from a shoulder-knot adorned with fringe and tassels.

Before Edgar had well surveyed the stranger, he was addressed by his companion of the previous evening.

“We have, I fear, intruded somewhat on your privacy,” he said, “at this unwonted hour—I and my friend, Sir Harry, Vane the

younger; whom I beseech you, Master Ardenne, know as such; right soon I trust to stand in similar relation to yourself; but we were both desirous of your company this morning to the House; and I would fain propose that you shall for the present occupy a seat nigh mine. Till you shall be in some degree accustomed to the usages and method of the House, it may be my experience shall in somewhat profit you; and I fear not to make this offer, seeing that, should you find hereafter that your conscience may not justify your being one of us, I shall provide that none may look on you as a defaulter from our party; and I have heard and seen enough, methinks, already of your character and bearing, to know that, even should you differ from us as to the quality or manner, you are not like to be against us as to the needfulness of some reform; so that to be seen companying one so hateful to the courtly

faction as John Hampden shall in no sort prevent you of advancement."

"Most thankfully," said Edgar, after exchanging courtesies with Vane, "do I accept your offer; the rather, that as yet I know not, though I fain would learn, the persons of many among your famous orators; and for the rest, my vote will not, nor my opinion either, be affected anywise by sitting in this place or that. But now, if I mistake not, time is urgent, and we should be on our way. Ride you, fair gentlemen?—My horses wait even now; but if you walked thus far, I shall dismiss them."

"We came on horseback; and it is, indeed, full time we were at the House; the bells rang nine some time ere we arrived," replied Sir Harry; "we will, if it so please you, get us at once to horse."

The pace at which they rode, when they had mounted, prevented the possibility of any

serious or connected conversation, and but few minutes were consumed in the brief gallop that brought them to the low-browed portal of St. Stephen's. The privates of the civic guard, on duty at the door, presented arms, as if to some high officer, as the patriot leaders passed them; and it was not long ere they were seated altogether in the body of the House, at no great distance from the Speaker's chair.

The galleries were crowded, as it seemed, wellnigh to suffocation, not with the ordinary idlers who resorted thither only to dissipate the tedium of an hour not otherwise employed, but with men whose anxious faces, and limbs that almost trembled with excitement, announced the deep and painful interest they took in the debate, which had commenced already, and with a spirit so unusual at the opening of a measure, as might be held a sure prognostic of the fiery and determined ardour with which

it would be carried on ere it might come to question.

At the moment when they entered, Hollis was on his legs, urging with logical and beautiful precision the absolute necessity of fixing, and on grounds so sure that they should never more be moved, the limits between right constitutional prerogative and absolute despotic power; pointing out the gradual and successive innovations by which the ruling monarch had encroached on all the liberties, both civil and religious of the English people; the tampering with Jesuited papists; the evident dislike to parliaments; the most illegal levyings of money by violent and arbitrary contribution; the billeting of irresponsible and lawless soldiery on private householders; the imprisoning of members, contrary to privilege of parliament for words or sentiments expressed therein.

“One of whom,” he proceeded, “one, noble

and eloquent, and wise and loyal; than whom no better subject breathed the breath of life within the girt of the four seas that compass Britain, **DIED**, miserably died for want of natural refreshment! Whose blood," he added, in loud and pealing tones that woke an echo in the breast of every free-souled man, "whose blood of life, untimely and unrighteously dried up, still cries, cries even from the dungeon walls wherein yet lies the mouldering tenement whence persecution drove the free and fearless spirit—still cries, I say, to every English heart—cries, trumpet-tongued, for vengeance!"

Wildly and fiercely rose the mingled shout, for it was nothing less, of approbation and disgust.

"Eliot!" exclaimed one bolder than the rest, making aloud the application which all had tacitly perceived; "Eliot!—the murdered Eliot!"

Meanwhile, the hall rang with diverse cries of "Treason!" "Vengeance!" "Order!" the latter word prevailing gradually even as the rest subsided, till the orator again obtained a clear field for his manly elocution.

With a lower voice, and less impassioned manner, he proceeded to recount a train of grievances that seemed to defy enumeration:—the new and unfair tax of ship-money—the seas ill-guarded, and the mariners left naked to the violence of Turkish pirates;—the depopulating of the city, so as to raise enormous fines;—the seizing of the merchants' money in the mint—the shameless project of brass money—the barbarous and reckless censures of self-constituted courts—"with their imprisoning and banishing—their stigmatizing, gagging, scourging, and mutilating—ay! I said *mutilating!*"—he went on, with energy befitting well his subject—"mutilating the free limbs of uncondemned and

unoffending Britons! and I say this," he cried, louder and clearer yet,—“ I say this, not of an Ottoman divan—not of a Spanish inquisition—but of an English chamber!—of a Star Chamber HERE! Here, in the land of Magna Charta!—here, where the code of Alfred is not as yet forgotten or extinct!—a chamber judging, *not* by law, and trying, *not* by jury!—a chamber, forcing men to yield their substance to be wasted in the raising armies and equipping fleets—for what?—What, but to compel their fellows, their Protestant and pious brethren, to worship HIM who made them, according not to conscience nor to faith, but to the will of painted potsherds!—scarlet iniquities!—hoary and venerable sins!—wolves in sheep's clothing!—faithless and hireling shepherds, hounding the dogs upon the flock, which they should guard and cherish!”

Amid a tumult of applause the popular and

weighty orator resumed his seat ; while Hyde uprose—not, as it seemed, to answer, but to palliate, to palter, to procrastinate. For not once did he summon courage to question, or deny, that which no earthly wit or wisdom could disprove. And fiercely as the measure was discussed, it was yet most remarkable that not one of the royal partisans, maintaining, as they did most resolutely, the debate from morning till past midnight, spoke so much as a word to the denial of these charges—urging alone the wantonness of representing with such sharp reflections things, some of which already were amended, and others in fair state of promise toward adjustment. The impolicy of alienating more the goodwill of the King, now well disposed to gracious reformation—or, above all, the wickedness of thus infusing jealousies, and strife, and discord, into the bosom of a state at this time flourishing, as some had the

audacity to add, beyond all previous precedent in the fair growth of freedom.

All this made forcible impression on the clear mind of Ardenne, as he listened with enthusiastic feelings, it is true, but still with calm discrimination, to the successive bursts—sometimes of eloquence, thrilling, sublime, and almost superhuman in its majesty, sometimes of coarse, fanatical and phrensied ravings—as Glyn and Maynard, Cromwell and Pym, and lastly the unrivalled Hampden, advocated this great measure—equals all, if not in perspicuity of argument, or vividness of torrent elocution, if not in talent or ability, at least in truth and fervour, and in that single-minded earnestness which proved, past doubt, their genuine and deep sincerity. At first he waited with strong interest the rising of some champion who should turn, or at the least dispute, the triumph with the speakers of the liberal party. Then,

as one after one, they took their places at the table, and spoke their speeches, varied in vigour and in brilliance, but monotonous in argument, or rather in the want of it, a sense of disappointment overcame him; and by slow degrees the strong conviction gained, that the cause must be indeed vicious and feeble, for which its most devoted favourers, wise, eloquent, and witty, as confessedly they were, had nothing to advance beyond what he had that day heard with mingled feelings of contempt and wonder.

Hours flew past like moments; and before Edgar knew that it was noon, evening fell dark on the discussion; and, neither party willing to adjourn, candles were called for, and the strife of words went on waxing more wild and fierce, as each successive speaker added his mite of fuel to the fast-kindling blaze. Meantime the House grew thinner, as the weary and the weak, the delicate in health, or frail in years, reluc-

tantly departed, actually worn out by the lassitude that succeeds ever to unnatural excitement; and the arena of the mental gladiators became more open to their virulent contention. And still at each succeeding pause the liberal party seemed to gain in strength—the mighty hum of approbation rose more audibly at every bold and popular sentiment; while the cheers of the diminished royalists now failed to rouse their flagging and disheartened orators.

So wondrous was the prevalent excitement, that it drove even the calm dispassioned blood of Ardenne dancing through all his veins like streams of liquid fire; and he found himself ere long lending his breath to swell the shout of admiration that followed every sentence uttered by the latter speakers. At length the House divided on the passing of the bill; and, howsoever certain the result had seemed, while distant, so thickly mustered the opponents of the mea-

sure, that many an honest heart fluttered in doubt, and many a face of England's noblest sons was dark as midnight with despondency.

During the moment of confusion, which always must occur at such a crisis, a whisper fell upon the ear of Edgar—a low, stern whisper, not addressed to him, nor at that instant comprehended—uttered, as he fancied, in the sneering tones of St. John—“Look now,” it said,—“look now, friend Oliver, to your most promising recruit!”

The answer came, though he saw not the speaker, in the harsh voice of Cromwell:—

“Nay, verily! but do thou look—and thine eyes shall see the truth of that I told thee!”

All, at the time, passed with the speed, and nearly with the tumult of a whirlwind; nor, although afterwards he sometimes deemed the words had reference to himself, did they then penetrate beyond his outward ear. With-

out a momentary doubt, a thought of hesitation, Edgar stepped forth, and sealed the downfall of his private fortunes by the vote which he recorded in the cause of England's liberty. A small majority, of but eleven voices, passed that eventful bill, the loss of which would have exiled hundreds—the best and wisest of the land—driving them forth to seek amid the snow-clad wilds of the New England shore, what they had then despaired of at home, “freedom to worship God.”

Scarce had the hearty cheering, which followed this announcement, ended, ere Hampden rose again to move “that there might be an order entered, for the present printing of it:”—and straightway, as if all that had preceded it were but the prelude and slight skirmish which so generally leads to a pitched battle, a debate—if that, which was all animosity and virulence and fury, can be called debate—ensued, which

speedily effaced all recollection of the previous struggle, and had wellnigh steeped the hands of the contending factions in each other's gore.

Hyde started to his feet the first, praying that he might have permission to enter his protest—believing, as he said, such printing of the bill, without concurrence of the Lords, to be alike unprecedented and illegal.

Ere he had well ended up sprang Jeffry Palmer, a member of high standing in the House for wisdom and experience no less than for distinguished talent, with flashing features and a voice that quivered with hot passion, and moved “that he likewise might protest!”

The mildest and most stately of demeanour among the assembled councillors might be seen with bloodshot eyes, and tones husky and cracked with clamouring—and the more sullen and fanatical, sitting with teeth hard-set and hands upon

their hilts, as if but waiting for a voice to cry "The sword of the Lord and Gideon," or some other text of warlike or bloodthirsty import, before they should betake them, in their own language, to the carnal weapon.

So critical, indeed, was the conjuncture of affairs, and to such lengths had private pique and public animosity been carried among men all armed, in token of their gentle birth, that writing coolly in his journal, after the heat and passion of the contest had gone by, Sir Philip Warwick has recorded, "that when they voted it, I thought we had all sat in the valley of the shadow of death ; for we, like Joab and Abner's young men, had caught at each other's locks, and sheathed our swords in each other's bowels, had not the sagacity and great calmness of Mr. Hampden by a short speech prevented us, and led us to defer our angry debate until next morning."

And so in truth it was; for at two of the clock past midnight, when he saw that nothing could be hoped in the then temper of the House, that wise and upright statesman moved an adjournment until two of the next afternoon, prescribing motives so replete with good sense and good feeling, that none so stubborn as could with any show of right gainsay him.

Worn out and wearied, body and mind alike, with the protracted contest, men of both parties mingled hurriedly as they flocked homeward; and again it was the chance of Ardenne, strangely enough to be ear-witness to a second conversation between Cromwell and Lord Falkland. The former he had joined, hard by the foot of the great staircase, desiring in some degree to cultivate relations with a man, whose words and aspect had imbued him with a feeling which he could not well account for, or define—but which in afterdays he mentioned as a prophetic awe,

for that he was in presence of a spirit mightier than his own. The latter overtook them suddenly, and was passing onward at the first without addressing either till he caught the eye of Cromwell—"Ha!"—he said, with a quiet smile not wholly free from irony—"Ha! Master Cromwell, think you there hath been a debate to-day?"

"Another time," replied the puritan,—“another time, and I will take thy word—but verily, I say to you—verily, as the Lord Jehovah liveth, had this remonstrance been rejected, then had I sold mine all of worldly substance on the morrow—ay! and had taken up my staff, and girt me with my sword upon my thigh, and never had seen England any more!”

“Nor you alone, perchance!” answered the youthful noble, after a moment of reflection, “methinks, I have heard others named for a like resolution!”

“Perchance me no perchance!” cried Oliver, with a triumphant smile—“Had the malignants carried it, I tell you that their victory had robbed old England of her trustiest spirits!—But now, my lord, mark well my words!—and you too, friend—if that you be—as I do partly think you are—and if you be not, and I be in error, then may the Lord enlighten and amend you—a friend to liberty,—mark well my words!—There shall be no stint more, nor let, nor hindrance! Papists and tyrants in this soon-to-be-regenerated land shall no more hold dominion! The name of Englishman, now scorned and scoffed at throughout Europe—you, Edgar Ardenne, *you* do know the truth of that which I aver—shall be as far and wide revered, as ever was the name of antique Roman!—For verily I tell ye—and I tell ye truth—that now the Lord’s good time hath come, when he shall choose him out a MAN!—I say not whom—nor

were it meet that I, the vilest and most worthless of his instruments, should judge whom the Lord listeth to appoint—but verily I say a MAN, who shall bring mighty things to pass in Israel!”

CHAPTER VIII.

Lo ! how 'tis ever on the stillest day—
When the breeze stirs not in the topmost bough
The aspen's quivering leaf—when peaceful clouds
Hang balanced in the dull and moveless air—
When earth and ocean bask in deep repose
Securely tranquil—that the thundrous storm
Rends the calm sky which bred it.

AFTER that mighty trial of the strength of parties, the bill of general remonstrance had passed through the House, there followed a short pause—a lull as it were, in the loud tempest of commotion—a breathing-space snatched from the midst of battle. With

the exception of a short and somewhat turbulent debate, on the day following that of the main question, originating in a wish on the part of the puritanic leaders to punish those who had protested on the previous night, but resulting merely in a penalty of form inflicted on one person—Jeffry Palmer—the Commons seemed to relax in the vigour of their defensive warfare against the crown. The bill for regulation of the militia and prevention of forcible impressment, unless in case of actual invasion, was, it is true, brought forward, but without any of that inveterate and rancorous spirit which had signalized their earlier measures.

The King on his return from Scotland, was received—chiefly in consequence of the exertions of Sir Richard Gourney the Lord Mayor of London, an active and uncompromising loyalist—with loud if not sincere manifestations of welcome and affection; was feasted

at the Guildhall with more than ordinary splendour, and hailed, as he passed to and fro the city, with thundering acclamations by the wavering and worthless populace. A further triumph still awaited him in the address presented at his residence of Hampton Court, by aldermen deputed from the city, requesting him to take up his abode among them, and to hold his court as heretofore in his palace at Whitehall.

This loyal and well-timed address—reputed, as it was, to be distasteful in no small degree to parliament—was graciously accepted, the deputies all knighted, and the request granted joyfully. The bills, moreover, most obnoxious to the King—that principally which would exclude the Bishops' votes—made but slow progress, and even should it pass the Commons, was not expected to receive the sanction of the Lords. Falkland and Colepepper, hereto-

fore active members of the reforming party, although moderate and wary, now having taken office openly—the former being Secretary of State in the lieu of Vane, the latter Chancellor of the Exchequer—held nightly conferences at the house of Hyde, for the well and wisely ordering the shaken and disordered principles of government; and would, as it seems probable, have met with eminent success in their beneficent and patriotic measures, had it not been for secret influences and the prevalence of councillors behind the throne, unseen and unsuspected, but exercising—and for ends most infamous and selfish—a power, to which, unhappily for him and for his kingdom, the mind of Charles, easily led and prone to arbitrary counsels, though obstinate and inaccessible to aught of argument unsuited to his own opinions,—yielded complete obedience.

Such was the state of matters—things gradually looking brighter and more bright for the royal party ; and the remonstrant leaders, Hampden especially, becoming not only less violent in their opposition, but beginning to judge more favourably of the King's motives and intent,—when the insane and childish protest of the Bishops was sent forth, instigated by the proud and angry Williams, declaring “all laws, orders, votes, resolutions, and determinations, already passed, or such as should hereafter pass, during their absence from that most honourable House”—compulsory as they affirmed it—“null and of none effect.”

The consequence was an immediate and almost unanimous vote, both of the Lords and Commons, for the committal of the prelates to the Tower,—one solitary member only so far opposing it, as to declare that he believed them utterly insane, and therefore recommended

Bedlam, rather than the Tower, as a fit place for their detention.

Then came reports of plots—rumours of aggressions meditated on the lower House—doubts and despondencies, and wrath and panics ! It was believed on all sides that, without confident assurance of support the Bishops had not dared to rush to such extremities. Petitions were poured in from every quarter ! one from the city, setting forth that, since their loyal gratulations on His Majesty's return had been misconstrued as though they would disown the doings of the parliament, they now declared their full resolve to live and die with them for the good of the commonwealth.

Addresses multiplied, and were accompanied even to the palace by such crowds, that in a message to the common council the King com-

plained of the tumultuous assemblages daily increasing, to the disturbance of his palace of Whitehall. On the same day the parliament petitioned him, to grant to them a guard commanded by the Earl of Essex—that appointed for their protection during his absence in the north, having been instantly disbanded on his late return—on account of a malignant party now daring openly to threaten them with violence.

To this request, reasonable as after events proved it to have been, the self-willed monarch returned a negative, though offering that such a guard should wait on them—under a leader of his own choice, utterly subservient to his will—“as he would be answerable for to Almighty God !”

This proposition they of course declined, perceiving doubtless that the guard so ordered

would be more like to militate against their liberties, if not their persons, than to defend them from external outrage.

It was upon the very day that followed this insidious offer—for such it must be deemed—that, urged by his worst counsellor, the false and faithless Henrietta, to that most rash and headlong step which rendered his affairs for ever irretrievable, and reconciliation with his subjects hopeless—elated still by his reception in the city, and heedless of the daily proofs of public feeling and opinion, he went on to commit his last and desperate aggression on the privilege of parliament—an aggression which had they tamely borne, his throne would have been fixed for ever on the firm basis of despotic rule, and England would have lain a fettered captive at his tyrannous footstool. It was on the next day, while the protestation that he would be answerable to Almighty God for the

safe-guarding of their liberties and persons was yet fresh upon his lips, that Charles struck that blow at the very existence of parliaments, which, had it fallen as intended, must have destroyed them root and branch. For on the afternoon of that eventful day, Herbert, the King's attorney-general, entered the House of Peers then sitting, and drawing out a paper in the King's own writing, read it aloud, by which the Lord Kimbolton, present there and then—and of the Commons, Denzil, Hollis, and Sir Arthur Hazlerig, Pym, Strode, and Hampden—stood each and all accused of treason, as conspirators against the King and constitution.

The Peers sat actually panic-stricken, and aghast, at this tremendous stroke of folly and misgovernment, hearing in sullen silence the grave accusation, while Kimbolton springing to his feet, with eloquent and strenuous indignation professed his total innocence; nor was

there any lord so hardy as to move for his committal on His Majesty's behalf.

Meanwhile, the Commons House was entered by the King's serjeant, demanding that the Speaker should deliver up the bodies of the members named above, to answer to a charge of treason—bearing no warrant or authority from magistrate or counsellor, but acting solely at the King's behest, and without intervention of the law. News came, at the same instant, that the private lodgings of these members had been visited by royal messengers—their trunks and studies sealed up, and their papers violently seized.

With bold and masculine resolve, well-suited to the peril of the crisis, did the House meet this haughty and high-minded insolence. The serjeant, having gone through his message, was desired to avoid the chamber; but word was sent the monarch, by a deputation, assuring him

those members should be instantly forthcoming, so soon as any *legal* charge should be preferred against them ; the House declaring, by a powerful vote, those violent acts of seizure breaches of privilege, audacious and illegal !—empowering their members to resist ; calling on all men to abet and aid them in resisting such attempts upon their liberties, as free-born Britons ; and instantly adjourning for the night, until the wonted hour on the morrow.

It was at a late hour in the evening of this fatal day that several ladies of the court, richly and splendidly attired, might have been seen, collected in a proud saloon, decked with the masterpieces of Vandyck and Rubens, with tapestries of Gobelins, and arras hangings, with cabinets of buhl and marquetry, buffets of antique golden plate, and yet more costly porcelain, and all those priceless luxuries which mark a royal dwelling. Among this glittering

group, and seemingly its principal, was one—a lady of low, slender stature, and a shape slightly awry, though by skill of her tirewoman this defect was so disguised, as to be scarce perceptible. Her hands were delicate, and gemmed, as were her ears, her neck, the bosom of her robe, and the rich volumes of her jet black hair, with Indian brilliants. Her features were agreeable and sprightly, yet such as could not properly be praised as regular, or beautiful; a pair of bright black eyes, and a coquettish smile, forming their chief attraction. Her conversation, lively, and perhaps even brilliant, though flippant and unguarded, was listened to by her attendant ladies, and by the only cavalier admitted to the presence—a man of noble bearing, easy yet dignified, and withal in person eminently handsome—with an attention so profound, that it denoted—even without the bended

knee, and the averted back—the speaker to be one of royal rank.

Music and cards were in the chamber, and a most lovely girl, of some seventeen or eighteen years, was dancing to the amatory strains of a concealed musician, in a style which would now be esteemed far too voluptuous, if not absolutely meretricious, to be performed by the chaste limbs of ladies, or looked upon by modest eyes.

Yet neither lansquenet, nor the soft melody, nor the exciting graces of the beautiful *danseuse* appeared sufficient to banish some uneasiness which lowered over that fair company. The brow of Henrietta, for she it was, was dark and gloomy, much against its wont, and her ill-humour had been so far contagious as to affect her bright companions with all the outward signs of discontent and sorrow.

While she was talking earnestly to the Lord Digby, now—since the flight of Jermyn, her adulterous paramour—her most beloved and trusty councillor, a short and hasty step was heard without, accompanied by a slight bustle, as if some more distinguished personage had suddenly, and by surprise, come on the unexpectant chamberlains and pages, sole inmates of the antechamber. The door of polished oak flew open, and bearing evident marks of discomposure in his depressed lip and overshadowed brow, a gentleman of graceful presence entered the apartment. Of that time of life, when the rashness and the fire of youth are tempered by the sedateness of increasing years, although the face has lost no trait of its attraction, nor the limbs of their alert and agile motion, Charles Stuart (for the new comer was no other), was of a middle height, but strong and well-proportioned, excepting that his legs were triflingly bowed

outward, a circumstance which, while detracting somewhat from the grace and symmetry of his appearance, was favourable more than otherwise to his accustomed exercise of horsemanship, to which indeed it might have been in some sort owing. His visage, of a just and oval form, was pleasing, although dark-complexioned; his features regular and comely, with a full dark eye, gentle and somewhat dull in its expression, unless its owner was aroused to sudden anger, when it could kindle up and flash as brightly as the keenest—he wore mustaches somewhat unusually large and curling upward, with a small pointed beard, of that precise and formal cut, which is so often met with in the portraits of Vandyck. The most remarkable trait, however, of his whole appearance, was that continual cloud of mild and softened melancholy, from which his dignified and stately aspect rarely or never brightened;

for even when he smiled, it was a faint and transient flash, scarce clearing up the gloom of that accustomed sadness, which brooded over his countenance; although his disposition was cheerful more than otherwise, and if not buoyant, certainly neither mournful nor despondent; and which, as fanciful and superstitious men have oftentimes imagined, is ominous of an untimely end. His dress, of plain black velvet, slashed and lined with satin, differed in nothing (save that upon the left side of his cloak glittered the diamond star belonging to the order of the Garter) from the garb of any private gentleman. He wore his hat above his sable hair long-curled and flowing, and in his hand he carried a strong cane, or ferrule, with a crutch-head of gold, which he struck passionately upon the carpet as he entered.

“The undutiful—disloyal varlets!” he exclaimed in tones of strong excitement, “the false,

rebellious knaves!—to deal thus with their sovereign!” and for several moments he paced to and fro the room, regardless of the eager entreaties of his affrighted wife to speak the cause of his distemperature.

“A message!”—he burst forth at length, but in a voice broken and faltering with passion—
“To me! to me a message! I tell you, Marie, an they have their will, I may indeed be *called* your majesty—be served upon the knee—be waited on bareheaded—but I shall be no more a king—nay ten times less the master even of myself—than the most lowly gentleman in all my wide dominions.—But so shall it not be!—No! By God—never!” and in a few disjointed sentences he told her how he had demanded of the parliament the bodies of six members, on a charge of treason against himself and them—and had received, not prompt obedience to his orders, but a message!

“And is it possible,” she cried, artful and evil woman that she was, in feigned astonishment and indignation, “that you, my lord,—you, heir to such a line of mighty sovereigns—you, monarch of Great Britain, will be thus braved and thwarted—will be controlled, defied, and trampled on by such a scum of low and scurvy fellows as this parliament?—that you will brook to have your crown robbed of its brightest jewels of prerogative—your sceptre wrested from your hands without one struggle? Would—wretched princess that I am!—oh! would to God, that I had tarried in my own glorious France, or that I had been wedded to a MAN!”

“Madam, go to!”—The King retorted sharply—for, all uxorious as he was, and prone to hold her slightest words as mandates to his will, his temper naturally hasty and impatient, was now unusually aggravated by the commingled

influence of anger and irresolution. "Be silent—and dare not impugn our energy and courage! England and you shall know, and that right speedily, that Charles Stuart brooks neither insolence at home, nor usurpation of his rights abroad! and for these—rash and reckless rogues—they, too, shall learn that I am yet a king!"

"Well said!—well said, my gracious sovereign!" exclaimed Digby, with an exulting voice, and an elated eye. "Better to crush at once this spawn of venomous and vicious serpents, in the dark den wherein they have engendered, than one by one to scotch them, when they shall have crawled forth to pollute the blessed daylight, and swelled from groveling reptiles to the full growth of rampant dragons."

"In this most noble wrath," cried Henrietta, "again I recognise the worthiest, the most high-souled of men! To-morrow shalt thou pull

these vile rogues by the ears from out their infamous cabal,—else never look me in the face again !”

“ Brave girl !” replied the facile King, rueing already his late burst of anger. “ Brave, brave, Marie, and beautiful as brave !”—and, throwing one arm round her waist, he led her to a sofa at the farthest end of the saloon, where, seating himself at her side, he hung with all the manifest and ardent passion of a boy-lover over the wily Delilah, who—prodigal in secret to another than himself of her voluptuous charms—had yet the perfidy, and with it too the power, to woo him, by a scanty and reluctant show of public fondness, to measures, her only interest in which was to bring back a banished lover to her guilty arms, how ruinous soever they might be, she recked not, to her too trusting husband.

CHAPTER IX.

A King?—a Tyrant!

It is a King's—to hold a sceptre firm
By love, not terror—his assured throne,
A people's confidence—his sword, the law
Tempered with mercy—and to guard the right,
The sole condition that affears his crown!
A Tyrant's—by enforcement stern to reign,
And slavish fear—no charter to admit
Beyond his present pleasure—nor no rule
His absolute yea beside.

DURING the first part of the night which followed this aggression of the monarch, the city was all tumult and confusion—men running

to and fro, in crowds or singly, conversing eagerly with white and panic-stricken visages—women, increasing with their shrill and anxious voices the wild din—and children, long hours past the accustomed time when they should have been sleeping peacefully in their warm chambers, wandering to and fro with looks of frightened and inquiring wonderment cast upward toward the agitated features of their parents. But the necessity of rest will conquer even the quickest and most moving causes of excitement, and ere the stars began to pall in the cold frosty sky, the thoroughfares of the metropolis were quite deserted, as if no turbulence of party strife had ever interrupted their security and silence.

The morning broke in its due season, and the only thing observable in the demeanour of the groups who gradually filled the streets, passing this way or that as men engaged in their ac-

customed avocations—in their pursuits of profit or of pleasure—was an air of general and pervading sternness—not merely gloom, but resolute and dark determination. There was no light or trifling conversation!—no jests! no laughter!—whatever of discourse seemed absolutely needful was couched in brief and pithy sentences, and uttered in a tone not puritanic nor morose, but sad, and at the same time full of energy, grave, and severe, and wellnigh awful in its character.

As the day advanced, the members of the lower House might be seen hurrying toward St. Stephen's, some mounted, some on foot, but all accompanied by at least one armed retainer; and these were greeted severally by the multitude with shouts of approbation, or with groans of censure and reviling, accordingly as they were known for men of popular or loyal principles.

Meanwhile, in a small chamber of the palace at Whitehall, richly adorned with painted walls and splendid oaken carvings, and overlooking from its lofty casements the streets through which the crowds were flowing toward the parliament, sat Henrietta with a single lady, a page awaiting, near the door of the apartment, the pleasure of his royal mistress. A frame filled with embroidery stood before her, at which it seemed she had but recently been occupied, though now she held a volume of some French romance, from which, however, her eyes glanced so often toward the windows, attracted by the mingled clamours of applause and hatred, rising at times even until they penetrated her reluctant ears, as to denote that little of her mind was given to the wild witty author, who apparently engaged her. Her eyes were full of bright and keen excitement; a hectic flush glowed in a spot of vivid crimson high upon

either cheek, and her hands trembled with a visible and nervous agitation. Her conversation also, if the light and frivolous sentences that fell from her lips at intervals merited such a title, was broken, interrupted, and evidently embarrassed by some internal conflict which she hesitated to disclose.

For a considerable time she struggled to maintain a semblance of composure; but, as the hours passed onward, her trepidation became more and more apparent. At every step that sounded in the long corridors, at every closing of a distant door, she started—and once or twice, when the rattle of a carriage or the clatter of a horse's hoofs appeared to cease before the gates, she actually hurried to the balcony and gazed abroad into the town, exposing herself as if unwittingly to the rude stare of the transient multitudes who failed to greet her with the smallest tokens of affection or respect.

Twice or thrice, ere the bells chimed ten, the page in waiting was despatched to learn whether no tidings had arrived from parliament; and each time that he returned the bearer of a negative, a peevish exclamation of disgust escaped her, not unnoticed by the lady who attended on her privacy. At length, peal after peal, the steeples rang forth ten, and then, with an exulting smile, as though she could contain herself no longer—"Rejoice!" she cried in high triumphant tones, "rejoice! my Carlisle—for ere now the King is master in his states—ay! and his enemies are all in custody!"

"His enemies—your grace," exclaimed the patriotic lady, to whom, with indiscretion equalled only by that of the rash doting husband whom she thus betrayed, she had divulged the secret—"his enemies?"

"His enemies, said I?" returned the Queen,

in accents sharper than before—"in truth, then, I spake wrongly! His traitors, rather!—His false, rebellious, and bloodthirsty traitors! By God's help, now his captives—Hampden and Pym and all their rabble rout!"

And as she spoke, sweeping across the room with such a port as would have well beseemed a Britomart striding upon the prostrate necks of Romans, in their turn subdued and humbled, and, entering again the balcony, she cast a wistful glance down the long avenue. But scarcely had she turned her back, before the highborn lady whom she had addressed hastily tore a leaf from out her tablets, traced on it some half-dozen words, and pleading on the Queen's return, casual indisposition, quietly left the chamber.

Ten minutes had not well elapsed ere she re-entered it—nor would the change in her demeanour have escaped the close and subtile

watchfulness of her imperial mistress, had not that royal lady been herself perturbed too deeply to investigate the mood of others. The Countess of Carlisle's features, cast in the purest and the calmest mould of conscious aristocracy, had worn throughout the morning an expression of grave feminine anxiety, and her broad placid eye had followed with a quiet yet observing scrutiny every unwonted movement, every nervous start, and every change of colour that had resulted from the Queen's excitement; nor had she tardily discovered that some dread crisis was at hand—though what that crisis was, not having been a party to the councils of the regal circle on the previous night, she might not even guess. The thoughtless words, however, of the fickle-minded Henrietta had given her at once the clue which her quick apprehension followed, as it were intuitively, through all its labyrinth; and she at

once availed herself of the discovery she had made with a degree of cool and present courage, that, even in that age of prompt and daring action, failed not to wake the admiration which it merited.

Now, however, when the hardening excitement had passed over—when the nerves, which had been strung so tensely to the performance of her duty, were no longer kept in play—when she knew that her trusty messenger was on his way, and past the palace-gates already, bearing the tidings of approaching insult, outrage, and peril to the liberties of England's parliament, the majesty of England's laws, she for the first time trembled, not for herself, but for her country. She for the first time began to fear that she might be too late, and that the blow might have already fallen, ere her warning should arouse the destined victims to perception of their danger. Her face was paler than its

wont ; and her blue eye, so tranquil in its usual expression, was slightly anxious.

It was but a little while that her uncertainty continued—for, ere an hour had elapsed, the Queen, whose passions became more and more enkindled with every moment of suspense, sending another messenger to learn whether the Houses were in session still, received for answer, that they had just adjourned until one of the clock, and that the members even now were passing to their lodgings.

“Heavens!” cried Henrietta, almost in despair at this displeasing and most unexpected news. “Just Heavens! can it be that he hath failed me!” And casting herself down at length upon a couch, she covered her head with a thick veil, and waited in an agonized and speechless fit of mingled hope and terror, the result of her intriguing machinations.

In the mean time the House, which had assem-

bled at the usual hour, not altogether unexpected of some further outrage on their privileges, had indeed, on receiving the well-timed announcement from the Countess of Carlisle, upon the instant voted an adjournment, that they might better so concert plans, of resistance to that lawless violence which they were now too well assured their sovereign had resolved to perpetrate.

It was at this moment, when all were hastening homeward, that Ardenne observed Cromwell hurrying to and fro among the leading favourers both of the popular and puritanic principles, and whispering to one a word or two, then passing to another; and, as he gazed upon his compressed lip and eye flashing with almost savage pleasure, he felt even more strongly than at any prior moment, the conviction that this wily person was indeed engaged more intimately in directing the important springs of party ac-

tion, than could have been supposed from the inferior part which he was wont to play in its ostensible and open movements. He knew not at the time, any more than four-fifths of the House, what were the secret news which had so suddenly produced adjournment; and had indeed himself voted against a measure which he could not comprehend, although the private hints of Oliver and Hampden had not escaped his notice; nor could he now conceive the meaning of the strong excitement which kindled all who listened to the words of Cromwell as it were with an electric spark. Not long, however, was he destined to remain in ignorance, for with his harsh features even more than commonly inflamed and ruddy, the puritan approached him.

“Ha!” he said, in a loud coarse whisper,—
“Ha! Master Ardenne—how is this, that you,
to whom we confidently looked for succour,

should, in this strait and peril have turned against us, consorting with the men of Belial?"

"I know not, Master Cromwell," Ardenne replied, "to what you do allude; nor have I heard of any strait or peril. I saw indeed that you and Master Hampden were desirous I should vote for this adjournment, but seeing no cause wherefore—nor being, so far as I know it, your follower or pledged supporter, assuredly I deemed it best for mine own honour to abide by the poor dictates of mine own opinion."

"Call it you then no strait," asked Oliver, with a dark sneer upon his lip,—“no strait nor peril—that Charles Stuart should dare come hither with his accursed cavaliers—with his lewd yeomen and rakehelly pensioners—seeking out whom they may devour—having their swords new whetted, and their hearts afire, to shed the blood of the saints?—should dare come hither—hither within these privileged, time-

honoured walls—to lay his violent tyrannic hands on those, with whose salt only we are savoured ?”

“What mean you, sir?—speak out!” cried Ardenne. “Will he indeed do this? Can he be so infatuated—so insane?”

“*Will* Charles Stuart dare it?” said the other, “say, rather, what he will *not* dare, if we the watchers and the guardians sitting on the tower, yea! on the housetop, to give note of coming wo, blow not the trumpet through the land. Yea! will he come, and that right shortly—Yea! will he come, and if our hearts be not the stronger, and our arms too, if need there be—will trample down the liberties of England unto everlasting!”

“Never!” exclaimed Edgar, vehemently moved,—“no, never shall he do so!—never while I—if none beside—have sword to wield and hand with which to wield it.”

“Ay! is it so?” returned the other, his whole face blazing out with a triumphant ecstasy. “Is it so? And would you draw the carnal sword if it were needed?”

“Would I,” cried Ardenne, “would I un-sheath the sword to guard these holy walls from desecration?—would I uplift my arm against the hireling ministers of lawless and despotic violence?—Ay, were those ministers ten thousand sworded angels!”

“Then fare thee well,” cried Oliver,—“then fare thee well, and hold fast to thy good resolve, while I go wake the rest to a like spirit. Above all be thou in thy place when we again assemble, and then call thou me fool and liar, an thou see not great things!”

The interval passed speedily away, consumed in wise and seemly preparations; notice was straight despatched to the Lord Mayor and corporation, of the threatened danger;—the

citizens were admonished to stand upon their guard; and members were sent down to the Temple, and the Inns of court, to warn the students that the House was well aware how they had been already tampered with, and to command they should not come, on any plea, to Westminster.

Ere the time appointed the house was crowded. Edgar was in his place among the first; and as he saw the five obnoxious members calmly resume their seats, as though no peril threatened them, a mingled sentiment of admiration and regret thrilled to his heart, at the idea that if indeed the King, with his wild dissolute attendants, should forcibly attempt to seize them, they surely would resist, and but too probably be slaughtered on the very spot which they had made to ring so often with their proud patriotic eloquence.

As he thus thought, a new impression shot

with the speed of light into his mind—" If they be absent—if they be absent when he comes, the fearful consequences may be, perchance, averted, which otherwise must beyond doubt result from letting loose a band of reckless soldiery to rush in sword-in-hand on gentlemen armed likewise, and almost unanimous to guard their liberties with life."

And on the instant he arose, and in a few words, powerful and manly, moved that the House should grant permission to those members to withdraw themselves, lest tumult, and perhaps even worse than tumult, fall of it.

" I second it," cried Cromwell, starting to his feet. " I second the most honourable member's motion. Let them withdraw them straightway to the city, until this tyranny be overpast."

Without a single voice or vote dissentient the question then was carried ; the House gave per-

mission that they might retire ; and at solicitation from their friends they instantly departed.

Scarce had the hurry and confusion consequent on their withdrawal ceased, ere a dull trampling noise was heard without, as of a powerful band of men. The word to halt was given, and for a while the sound was hushed, the members sitting stern and silent in their places, disdainingly to show any sign either of wrath or terror. Again the sounds were heard, ascending the great staircase ; and now the clink of steel, as broad blades of partisan or halberd clashed together—and now a shout, “ Fall on ! Fall on ! ” mixed with the shuffling tramp of feet, the jingling of scabbards, and all the bustle that accompanies a sudden and disordered march. Nearer and nearer came the tumult. The lobby was already filled, to judge from the increasing clatter, with armed intruders ; and now the din

of grounded arms rang audibly upon the ears of the undaunted councillors.

Then, for the first time, was a show of passion manifested among the younger gentlemen. A dozen, at the least, impetuously started to their feet, and not a few grasped, with an energy that proved how fearlessly they would have used them, the hilts of the long rapiers which all of gentle birth at that time carried. A single word, however, from the Speaker of the House—a single cry of order, sufficed to bring them peacefully into their places. But there they sat with eyes that actually flashed with strong indignation, and with that fiery aspect of the gladiator, which marked how rapturously they would have plunged into the fiercest conflict.

At this instant was the door thrown open, and a messenger sent in, who reverentially enough informed the House, that the King was at the

door—and that the Speaker was commanded to sit still, with the mace lying on the board before him.

Still not one word was spoken—not a whisper—not a breath, nor murmur, through that spacious hall—and every man sat fast, with head unmoved, and eyes fixed sternly straight before him; as if they did not so much as vouchsafe to cast a glance, still less a thought, toward the violator of their rights. Had there been aught of riot or confusion,—had there been aught of armed and passionate resistance—nay had there been any fear, or doubt, or wavering, it then had been an easier task for the misguided King to carry out his frantic and destructive purpose. But hard it is, and most revolting to all human feelings, to outrage and assault where there is neither terror nor resistance.

It was perhaps a minute, after the messenger retired, before aught new disturbed the

silence that prevailed unbroken beneath the vaulted roof—a minute fraught with the thronged sensations of unnumbered years—a minute that seemed longer than a life to every patriot seated there as gravely steadfast, as those senators of early Rome, who waited in their robes of dignity, and on their curule chairs, the moment when the Gallic horde should pour out on their white unshrinking heads the cups of massacre and vengeance.

Then came a quick irregular tread, that readily betokened, by its uncertain time, the irresolution and anxiety that were at work within the breast of him who was approaching.

“Enter not, any of ye, on your lives!” was uttered in the harsh voice of the King, before his person came in view; an order understood by all who heard, as it was doubtless meant by him who uttered it, to be words, empty words, and spoken for effect.

Then, leaning on the shoulder of the Palsgrave, Charles Stuart advanced! Those who stood nearest to his person might have seen a momentary pause—a brief involuntary hesitation—a reluctance, hardly perhaps acknowledged to himself, to cross what was to be the Rubicon of all his future fortunes. But so short was the pause, so small the effort it required to conquer that reluctance, that it would seem indeed as if, according to the classic proverb, destined already to destruction he were deserted by his sanity of intellect. Perhaps he had expected fear—abject and tame submission—had supposed that he should stride in triumph, unopposed and sued to on the bended knee, through that magnificent assemblage! Perhaps he had expected anger, indignation, and defiance! But now as he looked up those lines of crowded benches, and met no glance of recognition, encountered no full front even of wrath or scorn; but caught alone, row

behind row, those stern and masculine profiles, composed, severe, and passionless — profiles, averted less in resentment than in proud contemptuous sorrow—his wayward spirit for a moment's space recoiled, and he half wished the perilous step untaken.

It was but for the twinkling of an eye, however, that his rash mood of obstinacy failed him; for without a quiver of his nerves, a change of his dark visage, he strode across the threshold, about a pace before his foreign kinsman. The Earl of Roxborough, a tall and powerful man, armed, somewhat more than commonly, with a long military sword and heavy poniard at his belt, had followed close upon his master's footsteps, until he also stood upon the threshold;—he crossed it not, however; but stood there, leaning with his whole weight against the door which opened outwardly, so that it would have been impossible for any,

from within the house, to close it. His right hand rested, as if carelessly, upon the pommel of his war-sword, and his left twirled with a gesture of unbridled insolence, his long mustaches; while many a fierce licentious countenance might be seen glaring from behind him on the conservators of their country's freedom with a wild and wolfish aspect of malignant hatred.

The King himself, attired as usual in a plain garb of sable velvet, wearing no weapon but an ordinary walking-sword, and carrying in his right hand together with his staff, the dark plumed beaver which he had doffed on entering, stalked coolly up the House—the Palsgrave following slowly, and as it seemed with a half timid and reluctant step. Still all was silence!—silence so profound, that, save the heavy footsteps of the monarch, not a sound could be perceived—unless it were when from without

some weapon-clang was heard, or some rude threat or imprecation was muttered in the ante-chamber, by the desperate attendants of a Lansford or a Digby.

The face of Charles, grave and even sorrowful by nature, was something paler than usual ; but with that sort of paleness which conveys no thought of cowardice or trembling, but of immovable resolve. His mouth was firmly closed but not compressed, nor showing aught of effort!—His eye, calm, searching, cold,—but keen and hard as iron!—His nostril only of his features gave token of emotion, or of any feeling hotter than determination ; for it was dilated wide, and slightly quivering ! Yet was his hand steady, as the columns which upheld the roof above him, and his stride, now that he stood among his lieges—however it had been irregular and hasty ere he entered—was measured, long, and equal.

As the King advanced along the floor he turned his head from side to side, perusing with deliberate and steady glance, the lineaments of every member whom he passed; and if when at a distance not one eye had sought him, so when he now stood close beside them not one eye avoided him. Each, as Charles came into his line of direct vision, met his hard gaze with an unblenching and unloosing brow; for not one man—even of those the most devoted to his will, of those who *would* have served him at that moment, who afterwards *did* serve him, with their whole hearts and lives—but was disgusted, angered, full of deep sorrow, almost to despair.

Little there was, however, of the stronger and more stormy passions painted upon the brows of those who sat thus fearlessly, braving the temper of a king whose wrath was no less lasting and vindictive, than it was hot and

sudden. The expression that prevailed most largely, was of mingled aspect, half pity, half defiance. But when the tyrant—for that action, if that only, justified the title—approached the seat of Cromwell (who was, perhaps, at that day scarcely known by name to the proud sovereign) and his glance fell upon those grim ungainly features, then Ardenne witnessed—for his eye was still attracted, why he knew not, with a strange sense of fascination toward the puritan—then Ardenne witnessed that which in aftertimes he often called to mind, and never without awe and wonder—a dark conflict—a conflict of eye, countenance, and bearing, between those men so eminently thrown together, and blended in their spheres of good or evil action.

The glance of Charles, when first it fell upon the coarse and most unpleasing lineaments of Oliver, was instantly averted, but averted merely

as men ever turn the eye away from objects naturally hateful or unseemly. At that point of time the face of Cromwell was as tranquil, as immovable, as that of his great future rival; but the tranquillity was no less different, than is the stillness of a hushed volcano and the peaceful calm of heaven. The swollen and corded veins upon the temple, the eyebrows lowered and contorted, the balls gleaming beneath them with a fixed and baleful light, the nostril rigidly distended, and the lips pressed so tightly that they alone of his whole aspect were of a livid whiteness.

Ere Edgar had the time to think, had there been any matter yet for thought, the eye of Charles stole back, half timidly as it appeared, toward that tigerlike and glaring face. Then, as it met the sinister and ominous stare of fierce defiance, it brightened also—vivid, and

keen, and with a falconlike and noble splendour.

For some short space they gazed—those two undisciplined and haughty spirits—into each other's very souls—mutually, as it seemed, conscious at a glance of irremediable and desperate hostility. The King's look, quiet, although high and angry, and most unutterably proud—Cromwell's, sarcastic, bitter, furious and determined, and withal so savagely triumphant, so mirthful in its dire malignity, that Ardenne thought he never had beheld a countenance so fiendishly expressive! And Charles Stuart's aspect—after a fixed encounter of ten seconds' space—Charles Stuart's haught aspect quailed beneath it; and as he passed along—for the whole occurred in less time than were needful to recite it—he gazed no more around him, but went directly onward, looking (and

that, too, gloomily) upon the ground, toward the Speaker's chair.

But the stern democrat, as if conscious that his genius had prevailed, cast his eyes round him with an air of loftier feeling than Edgar had as yet observed him wear. It was a trifle, at the period when it passed ; and none but he noticed it ; but after-times and after-deeds, stamped it, no more to be erased, upon the tablets of his inmost soul.

Meanwhile the King had reached the chair ; and Lenthall, the bold Speaker, who had hitherto sat still, as proud, and far more placid, than his visiter, arose and stepped out stately and cold to meet him. Then the King mounted to his place, stood upon the step but spoke not, nor sat down ; and there he stood, gloomily gazing on the House, with a dark look of sullen anger, for many minutes.

At length he spoke. "Gentlemen," he said,

in a high voice, clearly audible to the most distant corner, though neither musical nor pleasing, —“Gentlemen of the Commons, I am sorry for this my cause of coming to you. Yesterday I did send a sergeant, to demand some, who by my order were accused of treason. Instead of prompt obedience, I received—a message!” and he uttered the last word with the most concentrated scorn and insolence. “I must, then, here declare to you, that though no king that ever was in England could be more careful of your privileges than I have been, and shall be, yet, I can tell you, treason hath no privilege! and, therefore, am I come to tell you that I *must* have these men and *will*, wherever I may find them!”

As he spoke, he looked around the hall with a deliberate air, scanning the faces of all present, if he might find his men; then, raising his voice higher yet, he called aloud, till the roof

rang again. "Ho! I say, Master Hollis! Master Pym!"

No answer was returned, nor any sound, save an increased and angry tumult in the lobby, with a brandishing of partisans, and a producing of concealed but ready pistols, so that some members thought to see the soldiers instantly rush into the chamber.

After a little pause, finding he got no answer, he turned to the Speaker. "Say," he exclaimed,—"say, Mr. Speaker, be any of these men here present?"

For a moment Lenthall paused, as doubting whether to hurl his own defiance, and that of the assembled Commons, into his very teeth; but ere the echoes of the monarch's voice had ceased, he had resolved upon the wiser and more prudent part, and bending with most deferential courtesy his knee, "I have, sir," he replied, "nor eyes to see, nor tongue to speak in this

place, save as this House, whose servant I am sworn, shall order me. And, therefore, must I pray your Majesty to pardon me that I return no further answer!"

"Ha! sir," returned Charles sharply, and with incipient fury, but a moment's thought convinced him that the humble answer of the Speaker defied at once, and rendered hopeless, any charge of violence against him. "Ha! sir," again he said, but in a milder tone, "I do believe my eyes are to the full as good as yours, and I do see my birds are flown; but this I tell you, and so look ye to it—I hold this House to send them to me! Failing of which, I shall myself go seek them! For, sir, their treason is most foul, and such as you shall thank me, all of you, now to discover. And I assure you, on a king's word I assure you, I never did mean any violence, and they shall have fair trial—I meant not any other!"

He waited not for further words; perchance he doubted what reply he might receive to this last *false* asseveration—palpably, unquestionable false—for wherefore brought he his disbanded soldiery, his rude and ruffian bravoës, with rapier, partisan, and pistol, into the very precincts of the House? Wherefore, unless he had designed to hale the accused members violently forth by the strong arm of tyrannous authority?

Stepping down from the chair, he walked, uncovered still, but at a quicker pace than that with which he entered, toward the lobby; but now as he departed, his looks were not turned haughtily from side to side, but sadly bent upon the floor; nor was his passage silent as before—for member after member started up as Charles went past him, with bent brow and clenched hand; and groans both loud and deep saluted him.

As he came nigh the seat of Cromwell, the King raised his visage, haggard now and pale, as with an anxious curiosity to look upon the man before whose eye he felt himself to have recoiled ; and, as he met it, Oliver sprang upon his feet, his long tuck rattling in the scabbard as he rose, and stamping on the floor with fury, shouted aloud, in tones not mild nor measured, the word " Privilege ! " A dozen voices took it up, though not so loudly, nor with so marked defiance as the first daring speaker, and the whole House was in the wildest and most uncontrolled confusion.

Delightedly would the despotic prince, had he but dared it, at that moment have cried ON !—have given the *word*, expected by his myrmidons, for massacre and havoc—have bid the swords, which were already thirsting in their scabbards, leap forth and drink their fill of that most noble blood of England. But,

thanks to Heaven, he dared not! There would have been no object worthy of the risk—no gain to justify the detestation he would have so heaped upon his head! He did not *dare*; and, therefore, smothering for the time his virulent and vengeful fury, he departed — the door swung heavily behind him; and with no muttered curses on the head of him who lacked the spirit to perform what he and they yearned equally to execute, frustrate of their desired vengeance, unsatisfied, and balked, his hireling desperadoes filed out from the venerable walls their presence had so shamefully polluted.

CHAPTER X.

He hath gone forth !

Not with the gorgeous majesty sublime
Of marshall'd hosts—not with the brazen din
Of trumps sonorous—but heartsick, and sad,
Despairing, and dishonour'd ! He hath gone—
Gone—that his place shall never know him more—
Cursed of his people—outcast from his throne—
A dim, discrowned king !

THE night fell, dark and tempestuous withal.
The winds wailed mournfully at intervals, at
intervals shrieked out with savage fury, and as
the heavy clouds were driven reelingly across
the firmament, blotting the faint light of the
winking stars, fierce bursts of hail and rain came
dashing to the earth, and ceased as suddenly
as they commenced. And ever and anon the

thunder growled remotely, but with a sullen rolling that seemed almost continuous, such was the length and frequency of the strong peals—and lightnings flashed on every side the heaven, now in broad quivering sheets of ghastly light, that transiently displayed the ragged edges of each fleeting storm-cloud in distinct relief, and now in wavy lines of most intense and life-like fire, rushing athwart the rack from zenith to horizon.

Yet turbulent as the night was over the city, and ominous as showed the gathering of the elements, still more alarming was the turbulence that reigned in the full streets, and more portentous was the concourse of the armed and angry citizens. The train-bands had been mustered in the early evening with arquebuse and pike, their lighted matches gleaming on all sides through the murky darkness, and the heavy trampling of their companies every where audible, as they marched to and fro vainly desirous to allay the tumult which had arisen instantly on the arrival of the accused members

seeking protection in the guarded precincts of the city.

From sunset until dawn the mayor patrolled the streets, with his assistant magistrates, vainly endeavouring to quell the terrified and savage populace, with whom—all armed as chance had ordered it, some with the perfect implements of modern warfare, others with weapons obsolete and strange, brown-bills, and glaives, and maces—each court and alley, from the purlieu of Alsatia quite to the Tower, was blockaded and beset. Chains were made fast athwart the most frequented avenues; and barricades of stone and timber, heaped rudely but effectively together, above which yawned the mouth of many a ponderous cannon, would have presented no small obstacles to any who should dare invade the privileged limits. Huge bonfires blazed in every quarter, torches and flambeaux streamed and wavered in each gust of wind, casting a singular and ruddy glare upon the pallid faces and unusual weapons of the un-

washed artisans, who formed the bulk of the assemblage; though they were mingled here and there with grave and well-attired burghers, their morions and gorgets at variance with their civic garbs and golden chains—with young and ruffling templars, to whom aught savouring of frolic or of fight was most congenial—and with sad-visaged and morose soldadoes, in suits of buff tarnished and soiled by service, girded with broadswords of unwieldy length, fresh from the German wars, or the Low Countries (then, as in every afterage, the battle-field of Europe)—all keeping up, throughout the livelong night, a dissonance of tongues as loud and jarring as ever rent the air around the heaven-defying Babel.

At times a sudden panic would run through the crowd, none knowing whom to trust or whom to flee—a cry would ring above the mingled din—“The cavaliers! The cavaliers! Flee! Flee! The King and his wild cavaliers are up to fire the city!” and without waiting to inquire, or to hear, the mob rushed they knew

not whither, trampling the aged and the feeble underfoot, and turning oftentimes the very weapons, they had belted on to guard their liberties, against each other in the blind and reeling rout. Meanwhile with words of fire and gestures of defiance, some bolder spirit would brave the panic-stricken throng, and rally it, and lead it back with brandished arms and inflamed features to meet the foemen who existed only in their imaginations maddened with terror and excitement.

Nor was the panic and confusion slighter within the royal palace. Between the hapless King and his perfidious consort, distrust—recrimination—wrath—followed by feigned repentance on the one hand—uxorious pardon on the other! Among the councillors, dismay and doubt—high words, and mutual reproaches, and all the vehement disorder that ensues on the adoption and discomfiture of evil councils! Digby and Lunsford wearying Charles, faint-hearted now and dubious, for permission to

assail the city-gates, and drag the impeached traitors forth from their stronghold at point of partisan and pike!—Others deploring the rash steps already taken, and protesting against further violence!—and some, the nobler and more upright spirits—Falkland and Hyde, and their associates—holding themselves aloof in deep resentful sorrow, that all their wisdom had been wasted, and themselves distrusted, and deceived.

Never was a longer night followed by a sadder morning; for although daylight calmed the terror and the tumult, it allayed nothing of the concentrated wrath, diminished nothing of the jealous apprehensions entertained by either party.

After a short debate the parliament, both Lords and Commons, adjourned for several days, appointing a committee to sit constantly, mornings and afternoons, at Merchants' Hall within the town walls, where they might be secure from further outrage, and free to devise means for vindication of their members, and safeguard of their violated rights.

Edgar informed of the commotions, and anxious for the safety of the city, called for his horse the moment after the adjournment, and, with some six or seven followers well-mounted and equipped, rode up the Strand—a scattered street at that day, occupied by the suburban dwellings of the rich and noble with terraced gardens sloping downwards to the Thames. He was full of calm resolution, and intended instantly to volunteer his aid for putting down the riots, and establishing some governance of law.

When he reached Temple-bar, the gates were closed with bolt and chain, a powerful band of musketeers with gun and bandoleers manning its loops, and mustering at every window that overlooked the area before it. But at the announcement of his quality and name the bolts were drawn, the heavy leaves unfolded, and he entered amid presented arms and muttered greetings of the sentinels. With a pleased eye he saw at once that order was restored. Suspicion still prevailed, and vigilance, but tumult

and confusion had given way to wise and watchful regulation. The shops were shut, and business was suspended, it is true, and all men who went forth wore weapons; but the trained bands patrolled the streets with magistrates at the head of every company, no less to enforce internal quiet, than to resist external force.

Scarce had he ridden twenty yards within the gate, ere a fresh summons roused the wardens, and a king's messenger, after some parley, was admitted and conducted by a file of infantry to hearing of the aldermen then sitting at the Guildhall. The business on which Ardenne came directing him to the same quarter, and strong anxiety to learn the future movements of the court still further prompting him, he at once wheeled to the rear of this small band, and passing onward with them was ushered in without delay to the mayor's presence, and in consideration of his place in parliament accommodated with a seat whence he might witness the proceedings of the day, and

lend his council, if need were, to these the magnates of the city.

To Edgar's astonishment, as to that indeed of all, the messenger announced that His Majesty was already entering his coach, to wait upon the mayor, when he had left Whitehall; and that he prayed that dignitary to call a common council on the instant.

Sir Richard Gourney, the then holder of the office of mayor, although inclined not slightly to the principles of the decided royalists, disclaiming, as did all the wiser of the party, any participation in, or knowledge of, a course, which, now that it had failed, they all professed to disapprove, was careful to display no symptom of subserviency. Perhaps, indeed, he truly felt that wrong had been committed, and was sincere, in the determination to maintain inviolate the privileges of which he was the guardian.

The council was at the time in session, and scarcely had the messenger withdrawn before the King arrived, not with the armed and dis-

solute attendants who had convoyed him to the halls of parliament, but with some two or three lords only, and those of the most moderate among his partisans. The shouts, that ran like wildfire along the crowded streets, mingled with groans and yells—the cries “Privilege! Privilege of Parliament!” announced his presence at the doors of the Guildhall, before he had alighted from his coach, and clearly proved the temper of the now thoroughly-aroused and fearless multitude; while, as a token of the perfect mastery of the law, even at that moment of tremendous and wellnigh unparalleled excitement, a daring pamphlet-writer, who had thrown into the monarch’s coach a paper bearing inscribed the scriptural watchword, “To your tents, O Israel,” was instantly committed for contempt.

The city dignitaries rose from their seats on the King’s entrance; they tendered to him all—all to the most minute particulars—that was his due, of reverence and ceremonial greeting; but

there was no heart inspired applause—no loyal spirit-stirring cry “God save the King”—no smile—no welcome! Strange it may seem, yet he had hoped indeed, infatuated man! that he should now succeed in gaining the authorities to yield their honoured guests to his demand; and so commenced what he esteemed a mild conciliatory harangue requiring their surrender. His speech was full of false statements of his veneration and regard in all past times for England’s laws and liberties—of his affection for the Protestant religion—of his enforcement of the penal statutes against the dreaded Papists—and no less full of promises, unmeaning, insincere, and empty, concerning his intentions for the future.

Little applause and no obedience followed! Baffled a second time, and yet more deeply mortified, he left the Guildhall—but desirous still of pleasing, and imagining (short-sighted and deluded prince!) that by a slender show of condescension he could efface the recollection

of so many arbitrary acts against the corporate and individual interests of the city, he vouchsafed to one—the worse affected toward his person—of the sheriffs, the honour of dining at his house; where he was served, together with his retinue, with more than courtly luxury—with all respect and honour, paid not to himself but to the station which he so ill occupied; but with no semblance of that glad alacrity, that honest and ungrudging heart-service, which is well worth a world of bended knees and hollow ceremonial.

In the evening—harassed in spirit, and fatigued in body, irritated by the reproachful hootings of the multitude that jarred at every instant of his homeward progress on his reluctant ear, and hopeless now of compassing his tyrannical ends—the King retired to his palace, there to give impotent and childish vent to his indignant spleen, by publishing a proclamation against all men who should presume to harbour or conceal the persons whom he had previously denounced as traitors.

Days passed away; each marked by some bold resolution of the Commons—by increased tokens of the deep respect and admiration entertained by the great bulk of the metropolis toward the vindicators of its rights—and by some weak and useless aggravation of his former measures on the part of the misguided and wife-governed monarch.

A week had scarcely rolled over their heads before the House, conscious of its own strength, and knowing the entire impotence of the King's party, determined to bring back their members to Westminster, as men against whom no legitimate or constitutional charge was pending; and preparations of unwonted splendour and extent were made for reconducting them in triumph to their seats.

The news might not escape the ears of Charles, bruited as it was all joyously abroad through every class of persons, and pleasing to nearly all—for many, even of those who heretofore had backed him with their voices and opinions in all his troubles, and who in after-

days as faithfully assisted him with life and fortune, were not entirely sorry for the occurrence of a marked reverse, which they fondly hoped might avail to check him in his inordinate and reckless cravings (cravings which to their own eyes they would not now disguise or palliate) for power unconstitutional, at least, if not tyrannical and absolute.

Bitter—most bitter—were the feelings of Charles, as he went (ungreeted by one loyal acclamation, his absence unlamented by one loyal tear) forth from the palace of his fathers—almost alone in actual fact, but absolutely so in sentiment—the Queen, for whose sake mainly he had embroiled himself with his true-hearted subjects, ungratefully and spitefully upbraiding him, not for the folly of his measures, but for his failure in their execution—his courtiers, who had urged him on to every fresh aggression, and lauded every new caprice, now silent and dejected—and the very guards who rode before his coach dispirited and crestfallen. Bitter—most bitter—were his feelings, but it was not

with the bitterness of manly and upright repentance—not with the bitterness upspringing from the sense of wrong committed, and resulting in a promise of amendment—but with that of discontent and disappointment, of unholy wishes frustrated, and merited reverses sullenly remembered.

Such were the feelings of that bad monarch and unhappy man, as he drove forth, that so he might avoid the triumph of his disaffected subjects, after the shades of early evening had already gathered dark and cold about the misty streets, toward Hampton Court, as virtually exiled from the metropolis of his oppressed and groaning country, and from the tottering and dishonoured throne of his forefathers, as from the hearts of his once loving subjects.

But the sun rose upon a nobler and more glorious spectacle—a spectacle rife with great blessings for the present, and brilliant omens for the future—the spectacle of a vast people, free and united ! victorious, not by the sword, nor over slain and mutilated carcasses, but by

the strength of popular opinion, founded on the broad base of justice—animated by the deathless love of liberty—and directed by such a knot of patriots, as England in no other age had witnessed. On came the fair procession, marshalled by loud triumphant music, and the yet louder shouts of honest and exulting myriads, gay with a thousand flags and banners flaunting to the wintry sun, which wore on that proud morning its brightest and most gorgeous aspect; guarded by all the sober strength of civil discipline, and all the orderly and bright array of the well-trained militia of the city; not fluttering indeed with tasselled scarfs or many-coloured plumes, but well equipped with morions of steel, polished till they shone out like silver, and stout buff coats all service-like and uniform, with their puissant pikes thick as a grove of pines, their broad heads flashing in the sunbeams—and arquebuses clearly burnished, as when they left the armoury. Fifty in front they marched, in close and serried order, striding along with regular and sturdy steps, rank

after rank, each as a single man—with that erect undaunted bearing which belongs only to the free, and with the tranquil eye and calm, though proud expression which marks the disciplined law-loving citizen, and not the fierce unruly democrat.

The companies were all arrayed beneath the civic banners of their respective wards, and headed by their captains, mounted well on strong and serviceable chargers, and gallantly equipped in scarlet cassocks and steel corslets.

Behind this stately host, preceded by the bearers of his mace and sword, and all the glittering insignia of city pomp, Sir Richard Gourney rode along, curbing to a slow procession pace, sorely as it would seem against its will, a splendid courser, whose footcloth, blazoned with rich armorial bearings, almost swept the ground.

Two and two, in flowing robes of scarlet, with chains of gold about their necks, and tall white feathers floating above their velvet bonnets, the sheriffs and the aldermen advanced.

Then, received by acclamations, that were heard for many a mile around, clad in their ordinary garbs, and wearing in their grave demeanour no tokens of undue importance or unfitting exultation, the denounced patriots rode steadily along, and, headed by their Speaker, the whole House of Commons followed.

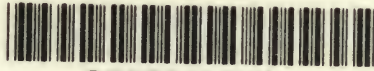
No banners waved above them—no gorgeous dresses pointed them for public admiration—no high assumption called the eye to them—yet as they swept slowly forward, a band of gentlemen—mostly of noble, *all* of reputable, birth—chosen for worth and wisdom, to be the delegates of a great people—of a people, the most manly and intelligent, and free of the wide universe—they could not but have attracted the eye, and fixed the untaught admiration of the most stolid or most slavish; what then must they have done, when they were passing before those whose liberties they had asserted at the risk of all that men hold dear?

Close trooping in the rear of these, another strong battalion of the train-bands marched.

aggressions, and the triumphant testimony borne by his indignant subjects to the untiring efforts and undaunted resolution of those noble spirits, whom his oppressive madness had converted, step by step, from the most steady guardians, to the most constant foemen, of his person and his crown.

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